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CalAgrAbility **FACTact**

Ability Solutions for Agricultural Communities

Hearing Protection in Agriculture

One of the most common hazards in U.S. workplaces is noise. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) estimates that 30 million workers in the U.S. are exposed to levels of noise that may not be safe. According to OSHA, "exposure to high levels of noise may cause hearing loss, create physical and psychological stress, reduce productivity, interfere with communication, and contribute to accidents and injuries by making it difficult to hear warning signals." Short term exposure can lead to a ringing in your ears or a temporary change in hearing. However, prolonged or repeated exposure causes permanent hearing loss.



Prolonged exposure to intense noise can lead to hearing loss, and necessity of hearing aids. Image from pexels.com.

On the farm, machines can get very loud. A tractor without a cab can reach 100 decibels, and chain saws can reach 110 decibels, which is about the same noise level as a rock concert. Scientists recommend that you use hearing protection when you are in places where the noise level is at or above 85 decibels. Very loud noises, even if they last for only a short time, can cause immediate hearing damage. OSHA requires employers to determine if workers are exposed to excessive noise in the workplace. If so, the employers must implement feasible engineering or administrative controls to eliminate or reduce hazardous levels of noise. Where controls are not sufficient, employers must implement an effective hearing conservation program.

What Can AgrAbility Do For You?

When California AgrAbility visits farms and work sites of farmers and farm workers, our staff often recognizes that workers are not wearing hearing protection. We recommend that workers should always wear hearing protection because although a worker may be in a quiet environment, sudden or loud noises are always a potential danger.

California AgrAbility assists farmworkers to obtain fitted hearing aids to help them to work safely.



Hearing Test. Image from alamy.com.



Ability Tools
Ability Tools connects Californians with disabilities to assistive technology devices, tools and services to make life easier.

abilitytools.org/

Email:
info@abilitytools.org

Toll Free Phone
(800) 390-2699
TTY
(800) 900-0706

I have impaired hearing, but I do not know how to get a hearing aid, what can I do?

There are many options because there are many vendors. First, you will have to get a hearing test. There are hearing tests that you can take online, however we recommend that you schedule a visit with a licensed professional to ensure you receive an accurate reading. Miracle-Ear Hearing Aid Stores offer free hearing tests in many locations. Costco Hearing Aid Centers also offer free hearing tests with Costco membership.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration Noise and Hearing Conservation

Contact Information

U.S. Department of Labor
Occupational Safety & Health Administration
200 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20210
1 (800) 321-OSHA (6742)

Website

https://www.osha.gov/dts/osta/otm/new_noise/

OSHA has extensive information on guidelines and explanations of noise and hazards. The website offers detailed hearing loss prevention resources for the workplace, as well as information on exposure levels for common workplace equipment. The Permissible Exposure Limits (PEL) for noise in different industries, including agriculture are based on the best available science and practice.



Hearing Loss Association of America

Contact Information

Hearing Loss Association of America
7910 Woodmont Ave, Suite 1200
Bethesda, MD 20814
(301) 657-2248

Website

<https://www.hearingloss.org/>

HLAA advocates for equal access for all Americans with hearing loss in areas such as employment, health care, education and community life. HLAA has local chapters, where you will meet others living with hearing loss in your own community. The organization provides opportunities to share stories, hear guest speakers, get information on technology and develop lifelong friendships, and gain access to valuable resources.

Miracle-Ear Hearing Aid Stores

Contact Information

Miracle-Ear, Inc.
5000 Cheshire Parkway North
Minneapolis, MN 55446
1 (800) 464-8002

Website

<http://www.miracle-ear.com/>

Miracle-Ear Hearing Aid offers their customers free lifetime checkups to check all components for proper functioning. Customers can get their hearing aids thoroughly deep clean, checked for proper fit. Additionally, customers can discuss their wearing schedule and possible modifications.

Miracle-Ear Hearing Aid has over 1,200 locations, so give them a call or visit their website and search, by zip code, for a store near you.

NIOSH Sound Level Meter App

Available on App Stores

Website

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/noise/app.html>

“The NIOSH Sound Level Meter (SLM) app combines the best features of professional sound levels meters and noise dosimeters into a simple, easy-to-use package. The app was developed to help workers make informed decisions about their noise environment and promote better hearing health and prevention efforts.”

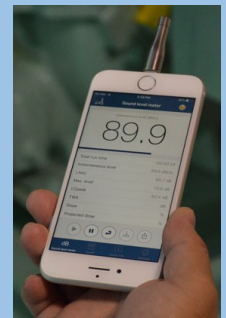


Image from CDC



United States
Department of
Agriculture

National Institute
of Food and
Agriculture

nifa.usda.gov/program/agrability

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CalAgrAbility serves farm and ranch families affected by disability and illness protecting the quality of life and preserving livelihoods.

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