

## New noise requirements take effect July 1.

If your farming operation is covered under Ontario's *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, then as of July 1 the operation must comply with noise prevention requirements that already apply to other industry sectors. But even if your operation is not covered, noise may still be a hazard. Keep reading to learn more about how you can protect the hearing of everyone in your operation, and how we can help you do it.

The new requirements set a maximum allowable noise limit of 85 decibels (dBA) over an 8-hour period, but this is a minimum standard, notes WSPS occupational hygienist Ilma Bhunnoo. As a rule of thumb, she recommends 80 dB. Another source of concern is short-term noise exposure. We may take it for granted as a part of farm life, but it could cause gradual, permanent hearing loss. That's because the short-term duration of a high-pitched noise may be enough to exceed the eight-hour exposure.

Here's how it works. For every 3-dBA increase above 85, explains Bhunnoo, the recommended maximum exposure period without hearing protection is reduced by half. She cites two common examples:

- a pig squealing at 109 dBA can start damaging unprotected hearing after 1.9 minutes
- a chain saw at 118 dB can start damaging unprotected hearing after 14 seconds

"How many times during the day might someone be exposed to these levels," says Bhunnoo.

### 7 ways to manage noise levels in your operation

Bhunnoo offers these suggestions:

- 1. Make a list of equipment and processes that produce high noise levels** — tractors, forklifts, grain dryers, blowers, power tools, lawn mowers, etc.
- 2. Estimate how close people are to the noise source** and for how long.
- 3. Consider ways to reduce the noise levels.** For example, enclose compressors, perform preventive maintenance to reduce vibration or idling, and replace aging machinery with newer, quieter equipment.
- 4. Organize work so that it takes place away from noise sources.** If this isn't possible, rotate workers to reduce individual exposure.
- 5. Educate people working around the noise** so that they understand the hazard and what they can do to protect themselves and others.
- 6. If people may still be exposed to excessive noise, provide the right hearing protection,** along with specific instruction and training. Include the device's limitations, proper fitting, inspection and maintenance and, if applicable, cleaning and disinfection. "Don't overprotect," advises Bhunnoo, "people still need to be able to hear what's going on around them."
- 7. Keep records of everything you do,** from testing to training.

## How WSPS can help

### 1. Know what you're dealing with:

- read O. Reg. 381: Noise ([www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r15381](http://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r15381))
- download these online resources from [wsps.ca/Information-Resources/Downloads](http://wsps.ca/Information-Resources/Downloads):
  - Agricultural Safety Topic: Protecting Against Noise
  - Hearing Conservation and Personal Protective Equipment

### 2. Learn more:

- take these one-hour e-courses (<http://wsps.ca/Shop/Training/e-Courses>): Preventing Hearing Loss from Workplace Noise • Personal Protective Equipment: The Basics
- sign up for Noise Control & Hearing Conservation (<http://wsps.ca/Shop/Training/Training-Schedules/Noise-Control-Hearing-Conservation.aspx>), a half-day onsite course facilitated by a WSPS occupational hygienist

3. Speak with a WSPS occupational hygienist, who can conduct noise assessments, and work with you to develop and implement noise control strategies. Call WSPS Customer Care: 1-877-494-WSPS (9777).

## Connect with us

