

Hearing protection for schools officers

Schools officers have been identified as being at risk of exposure to excessive noise, and therefore are part of the Department of Education's Hearing Conservation Program.

Hearing Conservation Program

The Hearing Conservation Program is aimed at achieving the safe management of noise within a workplace. In response to the mandatory requirements of the [Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 \(Qld\)](#), the program includes audiometric assessments (hearing tests) upon appointment to the department and ongoing at two yearly intervals.

[Attune Hearing](#) is currently the approved provider to conduct the hearing tests for all departmental employees. Education and instruction regarding healthy hearing including the appropriate use of hearing protection will be provided by Attune Hearing when staff have their hearing test. More detail about the program is provided in the [Hearing Conservation Program fact sheet](#).

There are control measures that can be introduced to effectively manage noise (e.g. 'buy quiet' programs when purchasing equipment, reducing noise at the source through motor encapsulation and optimal maintenance, etc.) However, for schools officers' personal hearing protection is often the most practical form of control measure to protect hearing.

Hearing protection for schools officers is **provided by the school** as part of the Hearing Conservation Program. Schools need to review that adequate personal hearing protection is provided and maintained for their Schools Officers.

When to wear hearing protection

Hearing protection only works when it is **worn**, is the **right type** and is **well maintained**. It is important to manage it properly to ensure maximum protection. Hearing protection is provided by your school.



Schools officers should wear hearing protection when using:

- leaf blowers
- brush cutters, whipper snippers, hand mowers
- power tools
- ride-on mower/tractor
- any equipment or performing any work that may be considered noisy.

Selecting your hearing protection

When purchasing earmuffs or earplugs make sure they have the Australian Standard approved symbol (seen to the right).



Earmuffs or earplugs must be rated at Class 5 (for noise exposures 105-110 decibels)

- earmuffs provide greater protection from noise than earplugs – earplugs are difficult to insert accurately, the wearer never gets the advertised protection
- earmuffs are easier to use when you have to take hearing protection on and off during the day

- earmuffs are a better choice when working on a job with dirty hands
- buy a box of cotton sweat pads to put over the cups of your earmuffs to make them more comfortable and not slippery to wear in summer
- earmuffs should be a snug but comfortable fit on your head
- earplugs can be good to wear at times when you are wearing other PPE.

Safety glasses, prescription or sunglasses can make a gap between your ear muffs and head

- for ear muffs to work effectively they need to form a tight seal around your ear to block noise
- wearing earplugs under your earmuffs is a good way to protect against excessive noise leaking in through the seal of the earmuff if you wear glasses.

Earmuffs can be worn with sun safe hats

- sunsafe hats are available that enable earmuffs to be comfortably worn.



Maintaining your hearing protection

Hearing protection only works when it is worn, is the right type and is well maintained. It is important to manage it properly to ensure maximum protection.

- Earmuffs need to be replaced immediately if they are damaged
- Earmuffs should provide a firm but comfortable seal around the ear
- Cushions on earmuffs should be soft and supple and replaced as soon as they begin to harden or crack
- Earmuffs should be replaced if the outside cups are indented, cracked or damaged
- Bands of earmuffs should not be stored or stretched over equipment when not in use.
- Earmuffs should be stored away from direct sunlight when not in use, the band can become distorted when exposed to heat and humidity
- Earmuffs can be wiped clean with wipes or cleaned with soap and water
- Disposable earplugs should be thrown away after each use
- Reusable earplugs can be cleaned using detergent and water and must be dry before the next use
- If earplugs lose their softness, shrink or become distorted they need to be replaced



- Earplugs should be stored where they can be kept dry, clean and out of the sun.

Noise induced hearing loss is PREVENTABLE.

Once your hearing is gone it will never come back.

PROTECT your hearing – you won't get a second chance.

Further information

For information regarding exposure to noise, hearing protection and healthy hearing access the [Creating Healthier Workplaces website](#).

For hearing test appointments contact: Attune Hearing on 1800 344 677

For questions regarding the Hearing Conservation Program contact: Organisational Safety and Wellbeing hsw@qed.qld.gov.au