

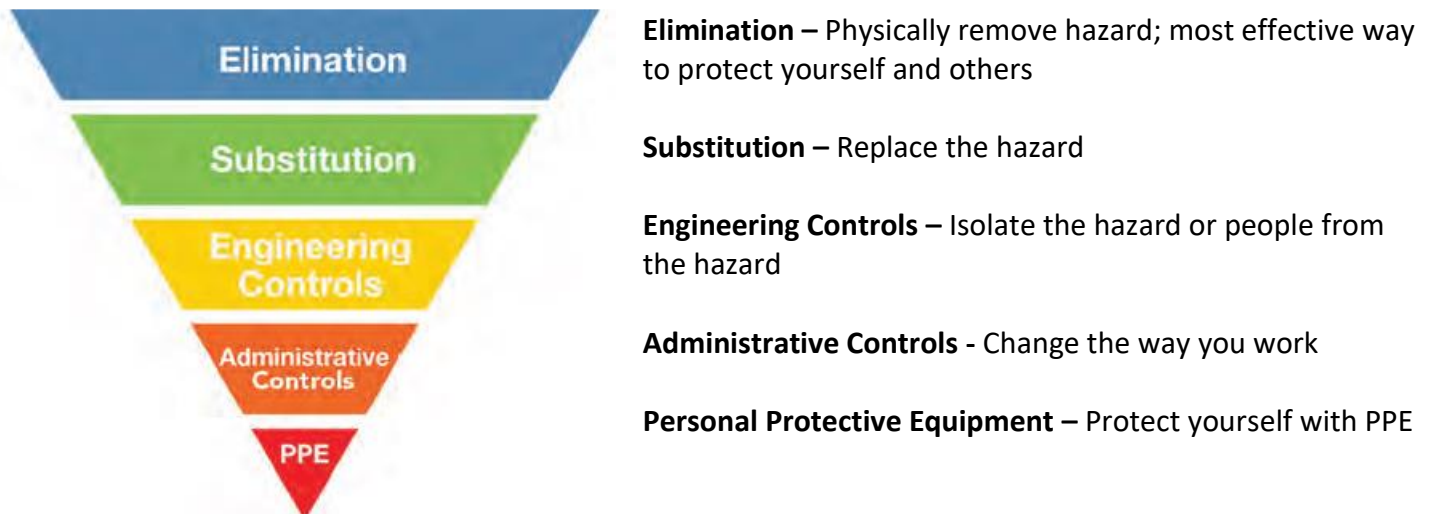
### Have you Heard? Hearing Loss Caused by Farm Noise is Preventable

Working in an agribusiness can be noisy. Studies have shown that farmers and farm workers experience nearly double the rate of hearing loss compared to the rest of the work force. It does not matter whether you are on the farm operating a tractor or in a warehouse with forklifts and other machines running, there are times where the noise around you can and will affect your hearing. Noise induced hearing loss can occur at any age and is 100% preventable.

Continuous exposure to harmful levels of noise over an extended period of time without proper protection can lead to Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL). The effects of the exposure to loud noises add up over a lifetime. Damage from noise exposure is gradual, and you may not notice it until it becomes more serious. If you feel like you have “gotten use to the noise”, chances are your hearing is already damaged.

Once your hearing is damaged, it is permanent. You can invest in hearing aids to help relieve some of the loss, but it is never the same as hearing. Also, at a certain point your hearing loss can become a hazard. If you are unable to hear warning buzzers or vehicles moving, you can inadvertently place yourself and others in harms way.

Luckily, there are ways to prevent NIHL. Using the Hierarchy of Control, below, we can find the best way to address any noise hazards.



For example, the chart below uses the Hierarchy of Control to find the best options to reduce the noise hazards while on a tractor:

Prevention Strategies	REDUCE NOISE LEVELS	ISOLATE NOISE	ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROLS	PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT
	Replace and lubricate equipment	Choose tractors and other machinery with cabs	Rotate jobs so exposure time to loud noises is reduced	Use earplugs, or muffs when around any noise 85 dB or greater
	Repair worn, loose or unbalanced machinery			
	Operate machinery at low speeds	Make sure doors and windows fit tightly and are closed	Take breaks from noisy operations	Ensure correct fit of hearing protection
	Reduce and isolate vibrations	Choose farm implements with sound dampening and absorbing features	Limit the amount of time near noise	If you need to shout when less than 3 ft away = hearing protection necessary
	Turn down tractor radio			
	Install or repair muffler			

No matter how hard we might try to eliminate the hazard, there will be times where the best option is to protect ourselves with PPE. One thing to keep in mind, ears come in all shapes and sizes. You must find the best protection for YOU based on your environment and task at hand. It is also important to properly wear the PPE. Too often, people may have the right gear, but do not know how to use it. The attached safety alert is from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health and shows you the proper way to wear your PPE. Noise Induced Hearing Loss is permanent, but it is preventable.

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