



Weekly Safety Tip

**October is National
Protect Your Hearing
Month**

Hey!... Listen Up Please, for a Moment

WHY? Because, if the sound from your headphones or earphones is too loud, it can contribute to noise-induced hearing loss.

It happens more often than you might think – those high-volume sounds can destroy tiny, delicate hair-like structures in the inner ear that help you hear. Inner-ear damage can occur from a single exposure to an extremely loud sound or from repeated exposure to loud sounds over months or years.

While some parts of the ear can repair themselves, **the inner ear cannot fix itself**. Close to 1 in 5 Americans ages 12 to 19 – about 17% – demonstrate signs of noise-induced hearing changes in one or both ears, which could eventually lead to hearing loss.

It's about Volume – Time – Distance

How dangerous a sound is to your hearing depends on three things: the volume of the sound, the length of time you listen, and how close you are to the sound. Sounds are measured in decibels, or dB, and the dBA scale reflects how the human ear hears sound. Typically, sounds at or below 70 decibels are safe for listening. Conversations generally register at about 60 dBA, city traffic at about 80 dBA. Sounds that may be harmful include lawnmowers, at roughly 95 dBA, rock concerts, at around 120 dBA, and fireworks, at about 140 dBA.

Based on loudness, you could listen to a 75 dBA sound for 40 hours per week, but listen to something at 89 dBA, and that time allowance is drastically reduced to about an hour and a half.

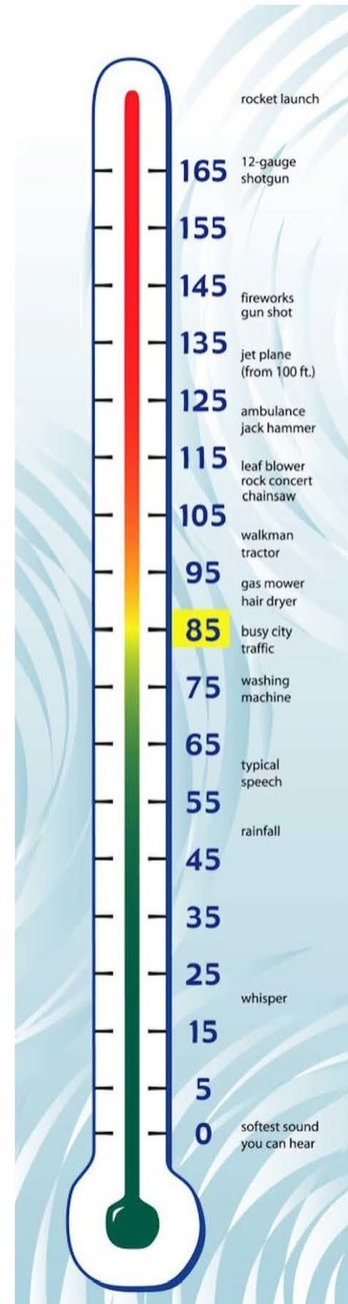
Signs you've been exposed to a dangerously loud sound include muffled hearing, ringing in the ears, and difficulty having a conversation from 3 feet (1 meter) away. Although your hearing generally returns to normal after such an experience, there is a cost. This temporary shift in hearing could lead to permanent harm to inner-ear structures and ultimately damage your hearing.

How to Stay Safe

Technology not available even a few years ago can now alert you of a risky listening environment. A sound-level meter app measures the sound around you to determine whether it's too loud. So can some smartwatches. You can also download the free **NIOSH Noise App** on your phone that was developed by acoustics engineers and hearing loss experts. It provides an accurate measurement of noise levels using any iOS device. If listening through speakers, the sound-level app can warn you if your tunes are creeping toward being too loud.

When wearing headphones or earbuds, **keep it at or below 60% of the volume allowed by your device**.

The **Rule of Thumb** is: *If someone else can hear the sound emanating from your headphones or earbuds when they are an arm's length away from you, the volume is too loud.*



David A. Varwig, CSP-retired and Board Member of the Safety Council of Northwest Ohio

Weekly Safety Share



Ohio Phones Down Law with Q&A's



SAFETY & HEALTH SHARE

If you are confused by still seeing so many people with their cell phones in hand while driving and wonder why drivers are not complying with the "Ohio Hands-free Law" than you may be surprised...

If you are over the age of 18, you can talk on a cell phone while driving, **as long as your call is hands-free or you are holding your phone to your ear for a conversation.**

These features can only be activated or deactivated verbally or with a single touch or swipe.

It is illegal to use or hold a cell phone or electronic device in your hand, lap, or other parts of the body while driving on Ohio roads.

If officer sees a violation, you can be pulled over.

Drivers over 18 years old can make or receive calls via hands-free devices, including a Speakerphone.

The distracted driving law can be found in [Section 4511.204](#) of the Ohio Revised Code.

WHAT'S OFF LIMITS?

With very few exceptions, anything that involves using, holding, or supporting a device while driving is off limits. This could include:



Dialing a phone number



Updating or browsing social media



Browsing the internet



Playing games



Sending a text message
voice to text is legal via a "hands free" method



Video calls or FaceTime



Watching videos
GPS/navigational displays are allowed



Recording or streaming video

Drivers can listen to audio streaming apps and use navigational equipment if they turn them on before getting on the road, or use a single touch or swipe to activate, modify, or deactivate them.



Remember, drivers under the age of 18 are still restricted from using their devices in any way, including hands-free features.

EXCEPTIONS include:

- Drivers reporting an emergency to law enforcement, a hospital, health care provider, fire department, or similar emergency entity.
- Drivers holding a phone to their ear only during phone conversations, if the call is started or stopped with a single touch or swipe.
- Drivers holding or using cell phones and other electronic devices while stopped at a traffic light or parked on a road or highway during an emergency or road closure.
- First responders (law enforcement, fire, EMS), using electronic devices as part of their official duties.
- Utility workers operating utility vehicles in certain emergency or outage situations.
- Licensed operators using an amateur radio.
- Commercial truck drivers using a mobile data terminal.

Law enforcement can issue citations for violating this law.

PENALTIES

1st offense

Two points assessed to driver license, up to a **\$150 fine**.*

2nd offense

Three points assessed to license, up to a **\$250 fine**.

3+ offenses

Four points assessed to license, up to a **\$500 fine**, possible 90-day suspension of driver license.

X2

Fines doubled if the violation occurs in a work zone.



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