

# 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 ensure 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.

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 (at 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 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, prescription or sunglasses can make a gap between your earmuffs and head

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



### Earmuffs can be worn with sunsafe hats

Sunsafe hats are available that enable earmuffs to be comfortably worn.



## Bluetooth earmuffs option

Bluetooth earmuffs can assist when operating a ride-on mower/tractor to better hear alarms when at a distance from the nearest speaker.

They can be connected to a mobile phone if having difficulty “feeling” the phone ring due to the machinery’s vibration and do not have to be removed to receive a phone call.

**They must be rated at Class 5 (for noise exposures 105 - 110 decibels).**

They are readily available from hardware stores and safety suppliers. One example is the Tactix Gen 3.0 Bluetooth Earmuff costing approx \$59.



## 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
- 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.**

For more information regarding noise 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](#)