Noise-induced hearing loss is one of the most common occupational diseases. Noise can damage hearing when it is continuously 85 decibels (dBA) or greater. Noise-induced hearing loss is permanent and occurs progressively over time. Noisy work areas can also elevate anxiety, hypertension, and fatigue. Here are the decibel levels of some common noises:

- Raindrops: 45 dBA
- Normal speech: 55 dBA
- Washing machine: 65 dBA
- Busy city traffic: 75 dBA
- Gas mower, hair dryer: 85 dBA
- Chainsaw, rock concert: 95 dBA
- iPod at peak volume: 105 dBA
- Jackhammer: 115 dBA
- Fireworks, gunshot: 125 dBA
- Typical office: 135 dBA

**Hearing Loss Prevention**
Always use hearing protection when working in an environment where noise levels are continuously 85 dBA or higher.

**How to insert disposable foam earplugs**
1. Roll the earplug into a small cylinder.
2. Pull up and back on the ear to straighten the ear canal. Insert the plug deeply.
3. Hold in place for 20 seconds while the earplug expands.

**More Info**
- Warning signs for noise overexposure include ringing in the ears (tinnitus) and temporary loss of hearing.
- Hearing protection worn incorrectly may not adequately reduce noise exposure.
- Noise levels follow the “inverse square law” and can be reduced by 25% if you double your distance from the noise source.
- EH&S provides hearing protection for UAlbany staff and can help select the appropriate protective equipment.