

## NewsWatch

# Accept sound advice



**NURSE MURF**

By HELEN MURPHY

**D**O your ears ring? Do they feel full? Do you have trouble understanding conversations, especially higher-pitched women and children? How well are you hearing on the phone? Does anyone complain you speak too loud or the volume of your TV or radio approaches that of a rock concert?

If you're nodding, chances are you've got noise-induced hearing loss. You're not alone. Farmers tend to have more hearing problems than other professions. Why? It's the machinery and no one insisting on wearing ear protection.

### How do we hear?

We hear by a chain reaction. Noise is funneled into our ears as sound wave vibrations. They hit the ear drum which moves three tiny bones in our inner ear. That movement vibrates a small window in the cochlea, which is a fluid-filled, hair-lined structure that looks like a nautilus shell. The fluid moves the 40,000 hairlike hearing cells, which convert the movement into nerve impulses. These are sent directly to the brain and are interpreted as sound.

When your ears are hit by a lot of

noise (vibrations measured in decibels) all day long or as a sudden blast, the hearing cells are damaged. Getting away from the noise can give these cells a chance to regenerate. But if your ears are continuously exposed to noise day after day, the cells have no chance to recover and they die. At this point, you will have permanent hearing loss. It is like a lawn. If you walk on it a bit, the grass will spring back. But if trampled continuously, it will die.

### Hearing loss is preventable

Hearing damage comes from a combination of noise intensity and duration: too loud for too long.

What is too loud? Anything over 85 decibels. If you have to shout to be heard over noise, if the noise hurts your ears, if you feel a bit deaf for a few hours after being around loud noise, this is over 85, leading to damage.

The rule of thumb is if you can't hear someone three feet away from you, it's too loud. Do you know how loud your kids MP3 player at full volume is? How about your machinery? See the chart below.

How long is too long? It depends on the noise intensity. For instance, without hearing protection, it takes about a minute to damage your ears using a skill saw at 112 decibels and 15 minutes on a tractor without a cab.

The good news is that noise-induced hearing loss is preventable. And if you already have some hearing loss, you can reduce its progression. How? Use formable or premolded earplugs, canal caps, or ear muffs every time you are exposed to loud noises.

If you don't want your kids to have the hearing of a 50 year old by age 25, make them do the same. Also keep them away from noise in the first place. Don't try cotton. It does not work because the sound goes right through. Keep your cab doors closed. This will improve the benefits of a cab on noise reduction by 50%.

Did you know that hearing protec-

## NewsWatch Briefs

### Forbes survey ranks Washington 5th-best business climate

Washington is a good place to run an agricultural business, according to the results of a national survey by *Forbes.com*, which says the Evergreen State is now the fifth-best state for business. In a previous survey, Washington was ranked 12th nationally. Part of the credit goes to the state government, which has supported farming with positive legislation and funding. A recent example is approval of an \$8 million tax-exempt bond by the Washington State Department of Commodity, Trade and Economic Development to finance and equip a wine production facility in Woodinville.

### Colorado ag department redesigns its Web site

Communicating with the Colorado Department of Agriculture has just gotten easier for the state's agricultural industry and public, thanks to the launch of its newly designed Web site. The improved site at [www.colorado.gov/ag](http://www.colorado.gov/ag) is now more user-friendly and informative. "The Colorado Department of Agriculture is involved in so many facets of the community, it is important to make information on our department and its programs easily accessible," says ag Commissioner John R. Stulp. The redesign was carried out to better communicate agricultural issues with Colorado residents.

tion will help you hear your equipment and other's voices better? It is because background noise is blocked out. Also, protective earmuffs come with built-in radios so you can listen to music, news or sports safely while working.

Remember, once you lose your hearing, it is permanent. So save the ears you have! Another bonus of noise reduction is that it reduces accidents, stress, anxiety and fatigue at the end of the day.

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RTT Ethanol Hybrids



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To protect the usefulness and availability of these technologies for the future, growers must implement an Insect Resistance Management (IRM) program as specified in product use guides for the following traits available in Pioneer corn hybrids: Herculex® I, Herculex RW, Herculex XTRA and YieldGard® Corn Borer.

For detailed IRM requirements for hybrids with in-plant insect resistance, refer to the appropriate product use guide, available from your Pioneer sales professional or on the web at: [www.pioneer.com/IRM](http://www.pioneer.com/IRM).



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### Limits to loudness

Noise level (dB)	Maximum time without hearing protection
85	8 hours
88	4 hours
91	2 hours
97	30 minutes
100	15 minutes
103	7.5 minutes
106	4 minutes
109	2 minutes
112	1 minute

## Common noise levels

