

HEARING BUYING GUIDE

LEGISLATION UPDATE: From 21st April 2018 hearing protection will be re-classified from Category II to Category III types of risk. New products placed on the market from this date will face even stricter tests for conformity and certification.

Existing hearing protection can continue to be placed on the market under a Cat II EC Cert until 21st April 2019. After this date **ALL** hearing protection needs to be certified to Cat III under the regulation.

Product already on the market (with distribution) can continue to be sold under either. As a responsible PPE supplier you can have confidence that our products will meet conformance to the existing and new standards as appropriate.



Step 1. Detection

When a noise survey is required, it must be carried out by a competent person such as a noise consultant.



Step 2. Protection

Use the information gained during the survey to select HPE with the right level of attenuation.



Step 3. Education and training

Not every member of your workforce will know all the benefits or understand how best to use their protection.



Step 4. Validation

Every user is different, how do you make the workforce is adequately, individually protected?

British Safety Industry Federation

Most safety helmets have a facility, usually an accessory slot at each side, to allow them to be fitted with earmuffs and other accessories. Also, many manufacturers offer helmet mounted earmuffs specifically for the purpose. Often the fitting points of the helmet and earmuff are of a 'standard' size and style, but here a significant issue arises:

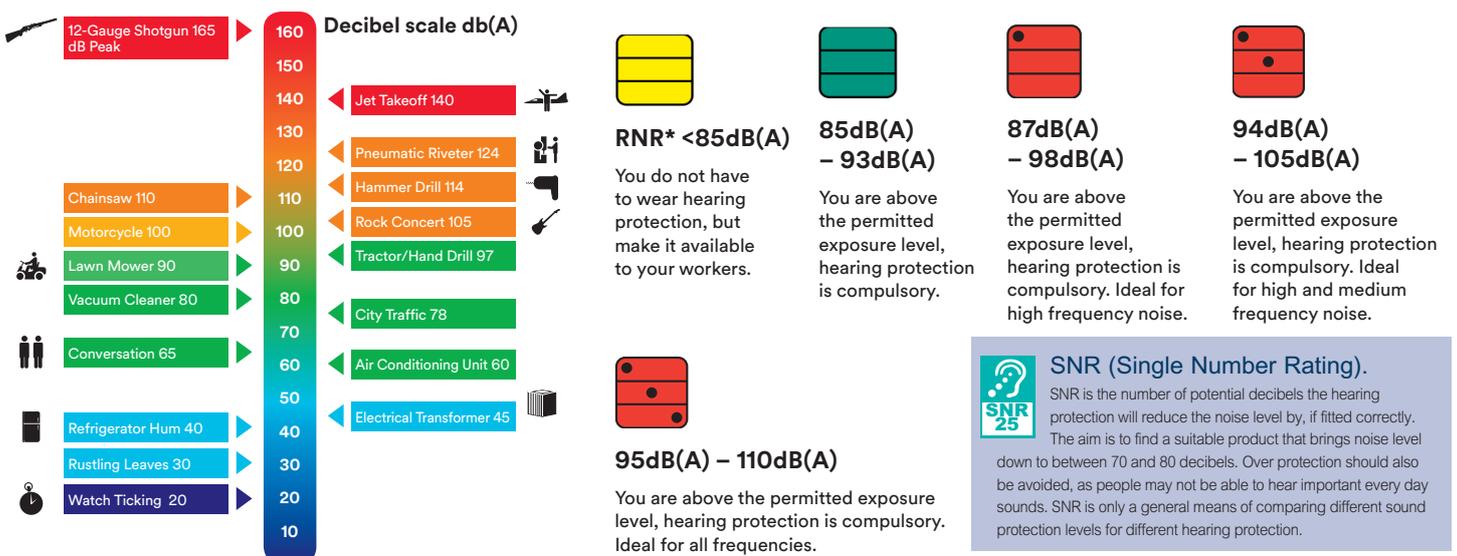
If you select a helmet and earmuffs from the same manufacturer, it is likely that they have been approved for use together. The manufacturer in question should make this clear in the product information. If, however, you select a helmet from one manufacturer, and helmet mounted earmuffs from another, they may well fit together, but unless you can see that they have been performance tested together there is nothing to show the earmuffs will provide protection!

One of the features determining the performance of earmuffs is the force produced by the spring arm. This is to maintain the seal of the cushion around your ear.

You may have selected the most suitable helmet for you or your workforce, and also the most appropriate earmuff for the noise hazard, also taking into account weight, comfort, user acceptance, etc, but without testing for use in combination you cannot assume that the earmuff will provide the expected protection.

Both the helmet and the earmuffs should be CE marked. This mark shows that a product meets the necessary legal requirements however it does not tell you anything about its performance for any given application or task.

There are different ways to gain the CE mark but the most common is to have a product certified using a harmonised European standard (see 'CE Marking and Product Certification' below). For helmet mounted earmuffs the standard is EN352-3, and it requires products to be tested together and manufacturers to specify the models of helmet tested with the earmuffs.



Just because it fits, doesn't mean it works

There are many helmet manufacturers who produce ear muffs for use with their helmets. There are also many manufacturers that specialise in producing one or the other, and distributors will offer a range of both products to give you the best choice. If you select products from different sources, make sure you check that the ear muffs have been tested on the specific make and model of helmet with which you plan to use them. Manufacturers are well aware of the situation and many co-operate to have their products tested together, so that the customer can select the combination they prefer as the most appropriate. So, if you want to use an ear muff with a particular helmet, make sure they have been certified together. Remember, just because it fits, doesn't mean it works.

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