

# Drywall installation—Noise exposure

## Explain dangers

Tools and equipment used for installing drywall can be noisy. Over time, this can lead to permanent hearing loss, tinnitus (ringing in the ear), and other effects.

Hearing loss prevents you from hearing other hazards on the job. It also causes problems in your personal life.

- It interferes with hearing normal speech.
- It prevents you from socializing.
- It can cause high blood pressure.
- It is permanent.

Noise is measured in “decibels” or “dBA”. The Noise regulation (O. Reg. 381) requires employers to **protect workers when the average exposure to noise exceeds 85 decibels or more over an 8-hour work shift**. This is called the 8-hour equivalent continuous sound level ( $L_{ex,8}$ ).

Before relying on hearing protection devices such as earplugs and earmuffs to reduce exposure to noise, the employer must look for ways to either eliminate the source of noise or minimize the amount of noise created by tools, equipment, or work processes.

## Identify controls

- When using loud tools or equipment, warn nearby workers to stay away. Put up barriers or rope the area off.
- Move sources of loud noise such as generators or compressors as far away from your work area as possible.
- Put temporary barriers or enclosures around loud equipment. Plywood with sound absorbing material (i.e., insulation) can significantly reduce the noise and its effect on others.
- Ensure tools and equipment are well maintained. This can help keep them quieter.

Keep in mind that exposure to noise is cumulative and can add up from using different tools and equipment or working in different environments.

If the sources of loud noise cannot be eliminated or reduced, hearing protection devices must be used to prevent hearing loss.

## Demonstrate

Show your crew the table below containing sound levels for tools commonly used for framing and drywall installation and the minimum exposure time without hearing protection (per 8-hour shift).

Tool and Tasks	Decibels (dBA)	Exposure Limit
<b>Battery-actuated tool</b> • Used for fastening 3 5/8-inch steel track onto concrete • Used for fastening 3 5/8-inch steel track onto steel I-beam	85.8	6 hr 35 m
	94.2	57 min
<b>Powder-actuated tool</b> • Used for fastening 3 5/8-in steel track onto concrete • Used for fastening 3 5/8-in steel track onto steel I-beam	87.3	4 hr 42 m
	104.7	4 min
<b>Gas-actuated tool</b> • Used for fastening 3 5/8-in steel track onto concrete • Used for fastening 3 5/8-in steel track onto steel I-beam	95.1	46 min
	101.7	10 min
<b>Handle drill</b> (1/2-in) used for mixing drywall joint compound	88.9	3 hr 15 m
<b>Spade-handle drill</b> (1/2-in) used for mixing drywall joint compound	94	1 hr
<b>Deep-cut band saw</b> (120 V) used for cutting 3 5/8-in (20-gauge) steel track	92.5	1 hr 25 m
<b>Impact screwdriver</b> (cordless) used for putting 3/16-in screws into holes in concrete	95.3	44 min
<b>Rotary hammer drill</b> used for putting 3/16-in holes in concrete	96.7	32 min
<b>Drywall screwdriver</b> (6.5 amp) used for putting screws into drywall on steel framing	97.1	29 min
<b>Angle grinder</b> (4 1/2-in cordless) used for cutting 3 5/8-in (20-ga.) track	101.7	10 min
<b>Drywall router</b> used for cutting drywall	105.8	4 min
<b>Chop saw</b> (14-in) used for cutting 3 5/8-in (20-ga.) track	109.3	2 min

NOTE: Sound level can vary depending on the model of tool or equipment. Refer to the manufacturer’s guide.