

Abstract DGA 2011

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Occupational noise and hearing aids

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Participation in work is one of the major areas in life. People with hearing loss may encounter restrictions in participation for which compensation is sought with hearing aids. Among the problems encountered by hearing impaired people, as assessed with questionnaires, noise appears the most prominent. Not for the risk of hearing damage, but because it hampers speech communication and reduces the ability to hear and distinguish environmental sounds and important sounds of equipment. Modern hearing aids offer a range of features - such as noise reduction, adaptive directionality, and even bilateral control of signal adaptation - aiming at the facilitation of speech understanding, differentiation of sounds, and environmental awareness. Still the problems of hearing impaired people with occupational noise can be regarded as a mismatch between the demands of the job or work environment and the capacity of their impaired ears. Accordingly, for hearing impaired people the limiting values of workspace noise and reverberation for auditory communication can be estimated from the Speech Intelligibility Index (STI) of the work environment and the Speech Reception Threshold (SRT) of the individual.

