

Dangerous Decibels®

Since 1999, Dangerous Decibels has been a public health campaign designed to reduce the incidence and prevalence of Noise-Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) and tinnitus (ringing in the ears, which is an early indicator of hearing loss) by changing knowledge, attitudes and behaviors.

The Dangerous Decibels activities include:

- an educator resource guide – 63-page booklet full of background information about hearing and classroom activities
- an educator training workshop that teaches how to present the Dangerous Decibels 45-minute classroom program
- a museum exhibition at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) in Portland
- OMSI Outreach programs to schools in the Pacific Northwest
- research projects on epidemiology of noise-induced hearing loss and methods of noise-induced hearing loss
- a website (www.dangerousdecibels.org) that includes information on hearing and noise induced hearing loss, effectiveness and epidemiological research projects and results, free downloadable educator resources, a Virtual Exhibit with eight interactive activities, educator training workshops, “Jolene” (a mannequin with sound level meter in her ear) and an online store.

The program was built upon an innovative collaboration between basic science researchers, museum educators, school teachers, students, civic leaders and volunteers in a unique public/private partnership. Partners have included the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI), American Tinnitus Association, National Center for Rehabilitative Auditory Research, University of Northern Colorado, Portland State University, Marion Downs Hearing Center, OHSU’s Oregon Prevention Research Center (Center for Healthy Communities), National Hearing Conservation Association and American Academy of Audiology.

Partners in global dissemination are Widex Canada, New Zealand’s National Foundation for the Deaf and the Pindrop Foundation, Australia’s National Acoustics Laboratory, all participants of the Dangerous Decibels Educator Training Workshops and people around the world who have developed their own “Jolene”. As of November 2009, people in 17 countries and 46 U.S. states have downloaded the “Jolene Cookbook”, a how-to manual.

Noise Induced Hearing Loss

- 36 million Americans are affected by hearing loss.
- At least 10 million cases of hearing loss can be directly attributed to exposure to dangerous sounds.
- Approximately 50 million Americans have tinnitus.

Although many people are familiar with hearing loss among the elderly (called presbycusis), fewer are aware of the extent of hearing problems among younger generations. Rates of noise-induced hearing loss are on the rise in all age groups. Tinnitus and noise-induced hearing loss can be caused by sounds in our jobs, homes and recreational activities.

The Dangerous Decibels classroom activities are designed to help students understand and answer the following questions:

- What are the common sources of sounds that can damage ears?
- What are the effects of these ‘dangerous decibels’?
- How can I protect myself from them?

Behavior-Related Objectives

After exposure to the Dangerous Decibels program – whether viewing the exhibit, receiving the classroom program by a certified presenter, interacting with the games of the Virtual Exhibit or participating in classroom activities from this Resource Guide – students should understand the danger of loud sound and respond by one or more following methods:

- Turn down the volume
- Use hearing protection and/or
- Walk away

Contact Information

www.dangerousdecibels.org