

CAN WORSHIP BE TOO LOUD?

Ears contain fragile hearing mechanisms that can be seriously compromised by loud noises. Music with drums, keyboards, electric guitars, basses, brass and string instruments and singers can be quite loud – loud enough to cause damage to hearing in band members and in the congregation. (A symphony orchestra produces 110 decibels of sound in general and between 120-140 at its peak, a rock band between 110-140 in general and 150 at its peak.) OSHA requires monitoring of all sounds above 90 decibels. An unshielded drum produces 120 decibels of sound at its source, a piano, between 92-95 decibels. Even when shielded, the drummers, pianist, and other band members are at risk without hearing protection.

Music has great Biblical significance and

is central to most church services. However, even in youth services and particularly for the protection of worship band members and those sitting closest to the front, a reasonable sound policy should be developed and followed in all churches. This can be accomplished two ways:

1. Obtain an audiometer and measure noise levels continuously both during practices and worship services at various places in the hall.
2. Utilize engineering and administrative controls like shields for drums, hearing protectors for band members, etc., and having a sound engineer who lowers noise levels when the sound level goes above 90 decibels.

Such monitoring need not diminish either the enthusiastic or Spirit-led nature of the worship, but will provide much-needed protection for band members and congregants.

CHURCH LAW

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