

In a quiet sort of way, we signaled the Green Industry in December 1972 that noise control and abatement would be under increasing government scrutiny in the months ahead. Excessive noise levels are being charged against poor job performance, lack of incentive, and hearing disabilities both temporary and permanent. Congress in an effort to right the wrong has turned the matter over to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Most people in our type of business have little appreciation of what constitutes excessive noise levels. We know that a chipper operating at full throttle produces quite a whine. Or a chain saw buzzing through a tree limb can put a temporary ring in the ears. But, even though hearing may be temporarily impaired, within a few hours we can hear adequately.

Not so, says the government. And to make their point stick, they've come up with charts, diagrams, graphs and other supporting data. One of the charts with which Green Industry businesses will undoubtedly become familiar is Table G-16 — Permissible Noise Exposure. Simply stated, the chart limits workers to a maximum 90 decibels of sound in an 8 hour day.

More on this chart and the impact of noise control can be found in the article by Robert R. Herder, vice

president, Asplundh Tree Expert Co. in this issue.

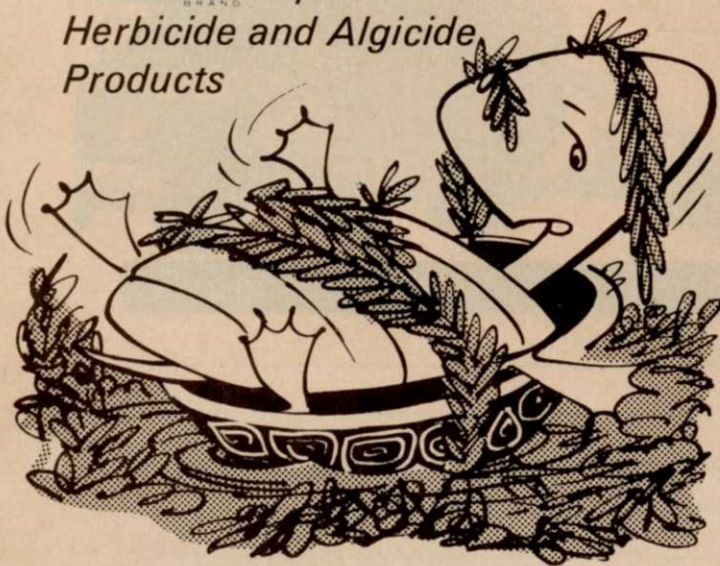
The noise issue is particularly challenging to manufacturers of noise producing equipment. Several leading manufacturers have reported producing equipment whose engines could be muffled well below the noise level, but whose chain or cutting mechanism remained above the acceptable tolerance. Further, just because a piece of equipment meets the noise requirements, doesn't mean that it will always be this way. Noise exposures have been made on new equipment operating under ideal conditions. You can bet your stump cutter that an older chipper or chain saw will produce more noise than a new one. When the OSHA inspector tests your equipment he'll cite you for excessive noise.

If you haven't bothered up to now to provide hearing protection devices for workers, do so immediately. In addition, exercise administrative controls over the labor force. Rotate workers away from noise producing equipment.

Lastly, the place where you can exert a little noise is in Washington. Legislators react first to the loudest squeaking wheel. A few letters, phone calls and thoughts expressed about the Green Industry will assure a substantial footing for your business in the future.

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