

# Sights & Sounds

A PUBLICATION OF THE SIGHT & HEARING ASSOCIATION

Winter 2002-03 Vol. 8, No. 2

## Toys that make noise



Sight & Hearing Association found five of these toys to be dangerously loud.

Would you let your child play with a toy that is louder than a motorcycle? Five out of 11 toys tested by the Sight & Hearing Association for its annual noisy toys study are not only louder than a motorcycle, but they're meant for children under 5.

For the fifth year, the Sight & Hearing Association and researchers from the University of Minnesota tested a variety of toys — taken right off the shelves of local toy stores — for potentially dangerous noise levels.

The top five offenders blasted out louder than 100 decibels. The two loudest toys, Cartoon Network's Scooby-Doo Telephone Book and The Home Depot Workman's Chainsaw, blared at 123 and 120 dB,

respectively. That means a potential for hearing damage in less than 7 minutes.

"You can not walk down the aisle of a toy store without finding a loud toy," said Julee Sylvester, SHA's marketing director. "I am absolutely appalled that a book is so loud, it nears the pain threshold for hearing damage."

Another concern of Sylvester's is how toys that reflect real life, such as a leaf blower or a chainsaw, are similar in loudness to the real thing.

"When an adult uses a chainsaw or a leaf blower, it is recommended they wear ear plugs," she said. "But, of course, children should not have to wear ear plugs while playing with a toy."

Because of a child's shorter arm span, toys are often potentially more dangerous because

*Preventing the needless loss of vision and hearing through screening, education and research*



Noisy toys continued on Page 2



### Noisy toys from Page 1

children hold them closer to their ears. In the Sight & Hearing Association study, the toys were tested at distances simulating how a child might hold the toy, directly near the ear (0 inches) and at arm's length (12 inches). A soundproof booth was used to ensure an accurate recording.

The Occupational Safety and Health Association (OSHA) protects the nation's workers from hearing loss, however, the same protection is not offered to children. Standards set by OSHA indicate that continued exposure to noise over 85 dB will eventually harm hearing.

"There is so much talk, and rightly so, about choking hazards or

toys that are dangerous to the eyes," Sylvester said. "But nowhere do toy manufacturers address the hazard to hearing."

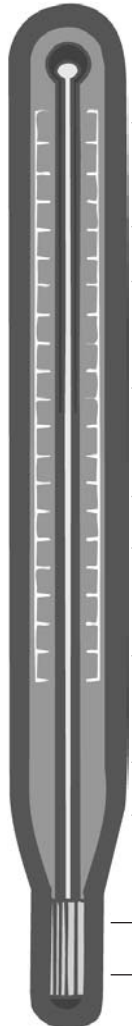
That's because regulations don't exist. The Consumer Product Safety Commission does not have regulations that address the loudness of toys. Another regulatory agency, the American Society of Testing and Materials, requires only that toys not exceed 138 dB when measured 25 cm from the surface of the toy. That is louder than a gunshot or a jet at take-off. Moreover, compliance with the standard is voluntary.

Exposure to noise from toys is intermittent and integrated with other daily noises. Based on a study by ISVR Consultancy Services in Southampton U.K., a child is likely to play with a sound-producing toy for 1.5 hours a day.

So, what should parents do? The Sight & Hearing Association offers the following tips: 1) Listen to a toy before you buy it. If it sounds loud to you, it's too loud for your child. 2) Report a loud toy. Call the Consumer Product Safety Commission at 800/638-2772. 3) Mask the sound coming out of the toy's speaker. SHA recommends sticking a piece of clear packing or masking tape over the speaker on any toy that produces sound. The tape creates a buffer that helps minimize the sound. □



## 2002 Noisy Toys List



**125 DECIBELS** *Pain threshold*

— 123 dB **Scooby-Doo! Telephone Book**

**120 DECIBELS** *Risk of hearing damage in 7 minutes*

— 120 dB **The Home Depot Workman's Chainsaw**

— 119 dB **Kawasaki Power Strobe Guitar**

**115 DECIBELS** *Risk of hearing damage in 15 minutes*

— 115 dB **Sesame Street Talk & Count Cell Phone**

**100 DECIBELS** *Risk of hearing damage in 2 hours*

— 100 dB **Battery-Powered Leaf Blower**

— 98 dB **Barbie "Sing with Me" Microphones**

**95 DECIBELS** *Risk of hearing damage in 4 hours*

— 94 dB **Cyclone Fazer & Saber**

**90 DECIBELS** *Risk of hearing damage in 8 hours*

— 90 dB **Sesame Street Light-Up Bongo**

— 87 dB **Blue's Clues Blue's Tunes**

**85 DECIBELS** *Beginning of OSHA regulations*

— 70 dB **Electronic Air Snares**

— 70 dB **Preschool RC Car**



the speaker on any toy that produces sound. The tape creates a buffer that helps minimize the sound. □

# SHA screening, quick response by parents help boy see clearly

Three-year-old Jonah Jerabek likes Rescue Heroes and puzzles, but he isn't quite sure about his new glasses. Jonah is one of the many children the Sight & Hearing Association finds every year who need glasses.

Jonah was screened at New Hope Pre-Kindergarten in October, where screeners from the Sight & Hearing Association found his vision to be 20/40 in his left eye and 20/50 in his right, with a tendency to deviate. As is custom with SHA's screening program, a rescreen is scheduled four weeks later. By the time the screeners returned for the rescreen, Jonah had already visited a pediatric ophthalmologist and was wearing glasses.

"Obviously, if there was a problem, I wanted to get it checked out right away," explained Angela Jerabek, Jonah's mom. "It made sense to move to the next step to rule anything out."

Dr. Parvataneni, Jonah's doctor at Northwest Eye Clinic, confirmed the screening results. Jonah is farsighted (meaning he doesn't see clearly up close) with a slight movement (misalignment) between the two eyes. The glasses will work to correct the muscle imbalance.

Angela's job as a high-school counselor heightens her awareness of the importance of vision and hearing to learning. "Vision and hearing are imperative to learning. You need to remove any barrier [whether it's a vision problem or something else] that would make learning more challenging."

It was difficult initially to hear the results of the screening, Angela says, because the problem wasn't something

she or her husband could see.

"We didn't suspect any problems," she said. "But that's what preventative screening is all about; it is so much easier to rectify the problem before it's a bigger, more noticeable problem."

The Sight & Hearing Association's Preschool Screening Program now serves 368 centers in the 11-county metro area.



Jonah Jerabek

---

**"We didn't suspect any problems. But that's what preventative screening is all about; it is so much easier to rectify the problem before it's a bigger, more noticeable problem."**

**—Angela Jerabek**

---

Last year alone, 237 sites were added, including New Hope Pre-Kindergarten, the site where Jonah was screened. □

## SHA grows screening program

Increased awareness on the part of parents and caregivers regarding the importance of vision and hearing to their child's learning and language development has spurred a tremendous growth in the Sight & Hearing Association's preschool screening program. In one year, the Sight & Hearing Association more than doubled the number — from 7,000 to 16,000 — of children it screens for vision and hearing.

"Parents and caregivers today are more cognizant of the fact that sight and hearing go hand in hand with learning and language," said Kathy Webb, executive director of the Sight & Hearing Association.

For instance, a child who has recurring ear infections is at risk for delayed language development. This stems from fluid remaining in the middle ear, which leads the child to hear muffled sounds, instead of clear speech, at a time when he or she is learning to talk.

And it's just as important to have a child's vision tested. Eye conditions, such as amblyopia (commonly called lazy eye), can normally be treated if caught before age 6.

The Sight & Hearing Association heralds the largest vision and hearing screening program in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metro area. For more information, call 651/645-2546, ext. 18.

# DINE or DASH?



How many times have you been out to eat and found yourself raising your voice to talk over the clatter and chatter? The Sight & Hearing Association is teaming up with the Minnesota Academy of Audiology for its restaurant reviews. If you have a noisy restaurant you would like the “noise patrol” to check out, please call Julee Sylvester at 651/645-2546, ext. 12.

The following review was sent in by Jim Pehringer, an audiologist with Allied Hearing in Minnetonka.

**Location:** Applebee’s, Chanhassen  
**Type of food:** American variety  
**Time of day:** 7:10 p.m. on a Saturday  
**Duration of stay:** One hour

**Atmosphere:** Typical family-style restaurant, bar located in middle of restaurant, with fun memorabilia on walls.

**Average noise level:** 73 dB  
**Peak noise level:** 77 dB

**What the decibel level means:**  
Talking normally difficult.

**Overall impressions:** The restaurant was at full capacity with the tester seated 20 feet from bar. Good environment.

**Rating on a scale of one to four bells (with one being quiet and five being noisy):**



## RESTAURANT NOISE RATING SCALE

- \* Pleasantly quiet (Under 65 dB)
- \*\* Can talk easily (65-70 dB)
- \*\*\* Talking somewhat difficult (70-75 dB)
- \*\*\*\* Talking only with raised voice (75-80 dB)
- \*\*\*\*\* Too noisy for normal conversation (80 dB and above)

Sight & Hearing Association (SHA) is formerly known as The Minnesota Society for the Prevention of Blindness and Preservation of Hearing.

Sights&Sounds is published quarterly for friends of SHA, a non-profit organization celebrating 62 years of service to the community. Please send story ideas, comments or address changes to:  
Sight & Hearing Association,  
674 Transfer Road,  
St. Paul, MN 55114.  
Ph: 651-645-2546  
800-992-0424

Visit our Web site at [www.sightandhearing.org](http://www.sightandhearing.org)

SHA meets the standards of the Charities Review Council of Minnesota.

SHA is a member of Community Health Charities—Minnesota.



Sight & Hearing Association  
674 Transfer Road  
St. Paul, MN 55114-1402

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
St. Paul, MN  
Permit No. 4351