Recognizing 2026 Safe-in-Sound Award Winners

Fort Worth, Texas — February 6, 2026 — The most effective and innovative solutions for managing high-noise environments and improving occupational hearing conservation programs were recognized at the 2026 Safe-in-Sound Awards™, presented during the 50th Annual National Hearing Conservation Association (NHCA) Conference in Fort Worth, Texas

The Safe-in-Sound Awards are presented through a longstanding collaboration among the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the National Hearing Conservation Association (NHCA), the Council for Accreditation in Occupational Hearing Conservation (CAOHC), and the American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA). This partnership reflects a shared commitment to advancing excellence in hearing loss prevention and honoring organizations that set the benchmark for innovation, effectiveness, and measurable impact.

Excellence in Hearing Loss Prevention Award:

ExxonMobil

Innovation in Hearing Loss Prevention Award:

DHA Defense Health Agency ®

To learn more about these successful initiatives and past winners visit https://www.hearingconservation.org/safe-in-sound-winners.

The deadline for submitting nominations for the 2027 awards is August 15, 2026. Guidance to nominate others or oneself can be found here: www.safeinsound.us

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ExxonMobil Corporation Honored with the Safe-in-Sound Award for Excellence in Hearing Loss Prevention™

ExxonMobil Corporation has been recognized with the prestigious Safe-in-Sound Award™ for Excellence in Hearing Loss Prevention™, affirming its leadership and continued commitment to protecting workers from occupational noise hazards across global operations.

With operations in more than 56 countries globally, ExxonMobil's team of 61,000 scientists, engineers, researchers, technicians, professionals, and other employees is focused on safely meeting the world's energy and product needs — something the company has been doing for more than 140 years. ExxonMobil operates in environments where noise control is critical. The company's comprehensive Hearing Conservation Program is a globally integrated initiative spanning more than 56 countries. Built on rigorous scientific principles and aligned with the NIOSH Recommended Exposure Limits (85 dBA TWA with a 3 dB exchange rate), the program serves as a cornerstone of ExxonMobil's broader risk-reduction strategy.

ExxonMobil's multifaceted approach includes targeted risk management, systematic noise-level reduction, broad and inclusive participation criteria within its prevention program, and the implementation of robust Buy-Quiet policies and hearing protection fit testing practices. These efforts advance hearing loss prevention across ExxonMobil's operations and provide a scalable model for smaller organizations seeking to enhance their own noise-risk management programs.

ExxonMobil's recognition underscores its ongoing dedication to worker health and safety, innovative risk-reduction practices, and leadership in advancing hearing conservation worldwide.

Pictured left to right: Colin McDaniel, Roger McKechnie, Eric Ward, Ulysses Orozco, Susan Craig, and Ashiq Zaman.

Auditory Studies Investigation Group: Winner of the Safe-in-Sound Award for Innovation in Hearing Loss Prevention™

The Auditory Studies Investigation Group (ASIG) from the National Military Audiology and Speech Pathology Center at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) and Defense Centers for Public Health -Aberdeen (DCPH-A) were honored with the 2026 Innovation in Hearing Loss Prevention™ for advancing hearing conservation through large-scale, operationally relevant research that directly links hearing health to military readiness.

The ASIG continues to have a transformative impact on military hearing conservation and readiness. Their work has demonstrated that temporary auditory changes can meaningfully affect operational performance, situational awareness, and long-term hearing outcomes. A cornerstone of this innovation has been the application of boothless audiometry. The ASIG developed standardized protocols to characterize dose–response relationships between cumulative blast/noise exposure and the probability of significant hearing changes. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the team transitioned this platform into clinical hearing surveillance, enabling annual testing despite restrictions on multi-person sound booths. The boothless system has since been adopted broadly, supporting tens of thousands of annual hearing tests across military hearing conservation programs and enhancing research data collection through integrated digital tools.

Building on this platform, the ASIG expanded its impact to hearing protection fit testing. The team implemented fit testing during annual boothless audiometric encounters and showed that individuals with minimal or no measured attenuation have substantially higher rates of significant threshold shift. Their work has also supported readiness initiatives, including validated operational hearing assessments now adopted as U.S. Army standards. Through scalable technology, rigorous validation, and direct linkage to operational outcomes, The ASIG has strengthened the scientific and clinical foundation of modern military hearing conservation.

Pictured left to right: LTC Kerri Klingseis, Benjamin Shefield, Douglas Brungart, Devon Kulinski, and COL (Ret) Nancy Vause.