***NEWS* Contact:** Vicki Bendure

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Bendure Communications, Inc.

540-687-3360 o/ 202-374-9259 c

[Vicki@Bendurepr.com](mailto:Vicki@Bendurepr.com)

**The American Academy of Audiology Recommends Protecting Your Hearing from Summer Outdoor Noise Threats**

Summer fireworks and outdoor activities with exposure to loud noises can impact hearing loss.

**RESTON, Va., July 17, 2017—**A recent report by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine points out that “Unlike glasses that can correct vision loss, current hearing aids cannot correct or restore normal hearing. Instead, they improve the audibility of soft sounds such as speech or music and ensure that other audible sounds do not interfere by becoming too loud.” As the number of Americans suffering from hearing loss reaches a record high, the American Academy of Audiology is warning the public to protect their hearing.

As the baby boomer population ages, more Americans are forced to face hearing health challenges. According to the National Institutes of Health NIDCD, approximately 15 percent (37.5 million) of American adults aged 20 to 69 have some trouble with hearing and approximately 28.8 million could benefit from the use of hearing aids.

While age is still the greatest factor in hearing loss, many younger people also experience

hearing problems due to exposure to loud music and noises including occupational noise. Among

adults aged 70 and older with hearing loss who could benefit from hearing aids, fewer than one in three (30 percent) has ever used them. With adults aged 20 to 69 only approximately 16 percent of those who would benefit from hearing aids has ever used them.

Outdoor activities can pose a threat to hearing health. More than 40 million Americans have some type of hearing loss with approximately 10 million of those attributable to noise-induced hearing loss—exposure to loud noise. The American Academy of Audiology states that noise above 85 decibels can damage hearing. To put that into perspective, noise from fireworks can reach up to 155 decibels. A jet plane taking off is estimated to be 150 decibels. Shooting a gun is around 140-175 decibels (depending on the gun). A clap of thunder can be 120 decibels.

“Many summer activities are noisy and can result in hearing damage,” explained Cory Portnuff, AuD Ph.D., clinical audiologist at the University of Colorado Hospital. “It’s important for people to use hearing protection when riding all-terrain vehicles, shooting firearms, using power tools and attending large sporting events.”

Damaging noise, however, is not only generated by outdoor activities. Many children and adults spend longer amounts of time in the summer using earbuds. Audiologists caution that stock earphones can produce sounds from 80 to 125 decibels. Some earbuds advertise that they produce sounds as loud as 110 decibels—a hearing damaging number, especially over time. Remember to use portable music players safely” cautions Portnuff, “or you risk hearing loss and tinnitus (ringing in the ears).” To ensure safe earphone use, you can remember the 80-90 Rule:

It’s safe to use music players at 80 percent of the maximum volume for up to 90 minutes per day. If you turn it down, you can safely listen for longer periods of time.

Some signs of hearing loss may include:

• Ringing, buzzing, or hissing noises in the ear after the loud noise.

• Muffled hearing after exposure to noise.

• Suddenly having to turn up the volume of the television, radio, or stereo and having other family members complain that the volume is too loud.

• Difficulty understanding people speaking to you and asking people to repeat themselves.

• Difficulty with phone conversations and understanding the other person.

• Sudden inability to hear the door bell, the dog barking, and other household sounds.

• People telling you that you speak too loudly.

• Ringing in the ears.

• Ear pain.

“Children are often exposed to the same noises as adults in the summertime,” warns Portnuff. “Parents need to make sure to teach them to stand back from loud noises and to protect their ears.”

School-aged children with hearing loss will sometimes exhibit poor school performance because they can’t understand the teacher assignments or classroom interactions. If hearing loss has been present from a young age, they often don’t recognize the loss and can’t identify the problem.

The American Academy of Audiology recommends that, anyone experiencing the above symptoms should make an appointment with an audiologist.

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The American Academy of Audiology is the world's largest professional organization of, by and for audiologists. The active membership of more than 12,000 is dedicated to providing quality hearing care services through professional development, education, research, and increased public awareness of hearing and balance disorders. For more information or to find an audiologist, go to [www.howsyourhearing.org.](http://www.howsyourhearing.org/)