

Audiometric Testing

Employees with sound exposures that equal or exceed an 8-hour time-weighted average of 85 decibels must receive audiometric testing. Employers of exposed employees must provide audiometric tests at no cost to employees.

Audiometric tests must be performed by a licensed or certified audiologist, otolaryngologist or other physician, a technician certified by the Council of Accreditation in Occupational Hearing Conservation, or a technician who has satisfactorily demonstrated competence in administering audiometric examinations, obtaining valid audiograms, and properly using, maintaining and checking calibration and proper functioning of the audiometers being used. A technician who operates microprocessor audiometers does not need to be certified. A technician who performs audiometric tests must be responsible to an audiologist, otolaryngologist or physician.

All audiograms obtained pursuant to information above shall meet the requirements of Appendix C: "Audiometric Measuring Instruments" of 29 CFR 1910.95.

Within 6 months of an employee's first exposure at or above the action level, the employer must establish a valid baseline audiogram against which subsequent audiograms can be compared.

"Mobile test van exception." Where mobile test vans are used to meet the audiometric testing obligation, the employer shall obtain a valid baseline audiogram within 1 year of an employee's first exposure at or above the action level. Where baseline audiograms are obtained more than 6 months after the employee's first exposure at or above the action level, employees shall wearing hearing protectors for any period exceeding six months after first exposure until the baseline audiogram is obtained.

Testing to establish a baseline audiogram must be preceded by at least 14 hours without exposure to workplace noise. Hearing protectors may be used as a substitute for the requirement that baseline audiograms be preceded by 14 hours without exposure to workplace noise.

Employers must notify employees of the need to avoid high levels of non-occupational noise exposure during the 14-hour period immediately preceding the audiometric examination.