



Noise Induced Hearing Loss Process and Guide for Authorised Audiologists

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*A workers compensation and injury
management scheme that works for all.*



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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continued connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to their cultures and to Elders past and present.

Disclaimer

No part of this document limits, or is intended to limit, rights and obligations under the law.

To ensure compliance with legal obligations, refer to the *Workers Compensation and Injury Management Act 2023 (WA)* (the Act) and associated legislation.

Introduction

WorkCover WA

1. WorkCover WA is a statutory authority accountable to the Minister for Industrial Relations and is the government agency responsible for the regulation and administration of the workers compensation scheme in Western Australia.
2. The scheme is designed to ensure workers suffering a work-related injury or illness are compensated for lost wages, medical expenses and other associated costs.
3. The scheme also oversees the claim process for noise induced hearing loss (NIHL), where workers in 'noisy employment' can claim a lump sum payment for hearing loss attributable to noise exposure in the workplace.
4. To make a NIHL claim, a worker must first undergo an audiological test conducted by an audiologist authorised to perform testing for workers compensation purposes. If the audiological test shows the worker as having the required level of global hearing loss to progress, the worker undergoes a NIHL assessment conducted by an authorised otorhinolaryngologist (ENT).
5. WorkCover WA may, from time to time, require an audiologist to undergo administrative training in order to continue to perform audiological tests for workers compensation purposes (regulation 42, *Workers Compensation and Injury Management Regulations 2024*).
6. WorkCover WA will continuously monitor and assess Audiologists' and ENTs' compliance and performance as part of the regulatory process.

Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) and WorkCover WA

7. Workers who believe they have suffered permanent loss of hearing because of noise exposure in the workplace may be eligible to make a claim for compensation through a NIHL claim.
8. A worker must initially undergo audiological testing by an Audiologist authorised by WorkCover WA to determine whether the threshold for percentage of hearing loss (PLH) is met. Workers must have at least 10% PLH (or 5% PLH if it is a subsequent NIHL claim) to proceed.
9. If the PLH threshold is met, the worker is then referred to an ENT who is authorised by WorkCover WA to perform NIHL Assessments. The ENT will determine the percentage of hearing loss that is NIHL (as distinct from hearing loss) over the assessment period. If the assessed NIHL is more than 10% (or 5% if it is a subsequent claim) the worker is eligible to make a claim.
10. Employers are obligated to pay for audiological testing, NIHL assessment (if required) and any associated reasonable expenses if the worker is in 'noisy employment'. 'Noisy employment' is employment where the worker is required to wear protective equipment to prevent hearing loss associated with exposure to noise that exceeds the standard set in the *Work Health and Safety (General) Regulations 2022*. Contact the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (DMIRS) for further information.
11. This Guideline sets out the standards and testing requirements for a NIHL claim and the criteria to be an authorised audiologist to perform audiological tests for workers compensation purposes.
12. This Guideline establishes a set of expectations that should be read in conjunction with the:
 - [Workers Compensation and Injury Management Act 2023](#) (the Act)
 - [Workers Compensation and Injury Management Regulations 2024](#) (the Regulations).

Testing Process for NIHL Claims

13. Workers who are in 'noisy employment' are entitled to an audiological test for workers compensation purposes every two years. 'Noisy employers' are obligated to pay for this testing. This includes workers who have left their last noisy employer within 3 months.
14. Workers who are not in 'noisy employment' are able to pay for their own audiological test if they wish to pursue a NIHL claim.
15. The performance of audiological tests for workers compensation purposes must meet standards approved by the WorkCover WA Chief Executive Officer (see table on the following page).

NOTE: The standard refers to *Report No. 118 of the National Acoustic Laboratories* (the Report). An error has been noted on page 25 of the Report for '*Male, column b*'. The correct reading should be -1.79059, not -1.795509.

16. Once an audiological test is completed, the audiologist must complete an audiological test report in the [approved form](#). A copy of the report must be given to the worker, the employer who paid for the testing and WorkCover WA. If the employer did not pay for testing, they are not to receive a copy of the report.
17. Audiological test reports are submitted to WorkCover WA via the WorkCover WA Online portal.
18. Employers who are obligated to pay for the audiological test are also required to pay for the NIHL assessment.
19. Once an audiological test is submitted to WorkCover WA Online, a NIHL claim case will be generated for those who meet the required threshold of global hearing loss to proceed. Regulation officers will notify a worker if they are eligible for a NIHL assessment.
20. Authorised audiologists should notify workers if they are eligible for a NIHL assessment, as well as the employer who paid for the test. Workers who are eligible should also be advised they will be contacted by WorkCover WA in relation to undertaking the NIHL Assessment with the ENT specialist, and they can contact WorkCover WA if they have questions or concerns.
21. In the event an employer is questioning whether they are obligated to pay for testing, a worker can contact WorkCover WA to seek a 'noisy employer' determination. Regulation officers in the NIHL team will conduct enquiries to determine whether the obligation to pay for testing exists.
22. Involvement of external parties (e.g. legal representatives, advocates, etc.) should be limited to situations where the worker believes obligations under the Act are not being met, or if they wish to dispute a particular result or outcome. Where an employer is complying with their obligations under the Act, there is no requirement to involve external parties.
23. Workers are encouraged to contact WorkCover WA prior to seeking legal advice as regulation officers may be able to assist with their enquiry. If necessary, regulation officers will inform the worker they should seek legal advice. WorkCover WA does not provide legal advice.

Approved Standards to Perform an Audiological Test

TABLE 1: TESTING / MEASUREMENT STANDARDS TO PERFORM AN AUDIOLOGICAL TEST (r.45(2)(a))

Part of the Test	Approved Standard
Period of quiet prior to an audiological test.	The worker has not been exposed to noise levels above 80dB(A) over 16 hours prior to the test taking place. If this has not been achieved, the test must be rescheduled to a later date.
Preliminary examination.	A physical and otoscopic examination for the purpose of testing abnormalities may be performed. Should the authorised audiologist determine there is a condition present which may cause temporary hearing loss (i.e. occlusion of the ear canal by wax), the worker must be referred to a medical practitioner for treatment before the audiological test may be performed.
Air conduction test.	An air conduction test must be performed. An air conduction test is to be conducted bilaterally at the frequencies 500, 1000, 1500, 2000, 3000, 4000, 6000, 8000 Hz, in accordance with the hearing loss table EB published in Appendix 7 of Report No. 118 of the National Acoustic Laboratories.
Bone conduction test.	A bone conduction test may be performed. A bone conduction test is to be conducted bilaterally at the frequencies 500, 1000, 1500, 2000, 3000, 4000 Hz, in accordance with the hearing loss table RB published in Appendix 3 of Report No. 118 of the National Acoustic Laboratories (the Report) unless there is a 10dB or less gap between the air conduction thresholds and none of the criteria for clinical masking set out below have been met.
Clinical masking.	Clinical masking, employing narrow band noise must be applied where: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is a 40dB or greater difference between either the air conduction thresholds, or the air conduction threshold and the unmasked bone conduction threshold in the opposite ear at any frequency, and/or • bone conduction thresholds show a 15dB or greater difference between the air conduction and bone conduction thresholds in the same ear.
Audiogram.	An audiogram setting out the results of the air conduction/bone conduction test is to be produced and included in the Audiological Test Report.
Calculation of hearing loss.	Hearing loss is to be calculated in accordance with the hearing loss tables RB and EB published in Appendices 3 and 7 of Report No. 118 of the National Acoustic Laboratories (the Report). The presbycusis correction table in Appendix 5 of the Report is to be applied when calculating hearing loss.

Criteria for Authorised Audiologists

Criteria for Approval as an Audiologist

24. An audiologist must hold a degree of post graduate diploma in audiology and be accredited by Audiology Australia Ltd (ABN 31 168 531 324).

Registration for WorkCover WA Online

25. Audiologists can apply for registration via WorkCover WA Online.
26. Audiologists must successfully complete an online questionnaire to gain access to WorkCover WA Online.
27. There are no application fees required to become an approved Audiologist or ENT.
28. The Audiologist or ENT must provide supporting documentation to confirm eligibility for registration (e.g. copies of qualifications, proof of registration, etc.)

NIHL Registry and Disclosure of Information

29. WorkCover WA will maintain a registry of hearing tests (e.g. prior audiometric tests), audiological tests, NIHL Assessments, NIHL claims and liability decision notices specifying the amount of compensation paid.
30. A person who has access to the NIHL register in the course of their employment must not disclose information held in the NIHL register.
31. The Regulations authorises WorkCover WA to disclose any of the above in certain circumstances.



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