

Hearing Loss Prevention Section

Explanation of industrial audiogram (hearing test) categories

Each audiogram submitted to the WorkSafeBC Hearing Loss Prevention Section must be categorized according to specific criteria. This categorization can identify individual or occupational trends requiring attention.

1. Baseline tests (first audiograms):

ABNORMAL (A)

Any person exhibiting a significant hearing loss in the low frequencies, in either ear, should seek medical advice through the family physician, who may refer the worker to an ear, nose, and throat specialist. . This worker may not necessarily have a noise-induced hearing loss, but a technician is not qualified to interpret these tests.

EARLY WARNING (EW)

Any test with a high frequency 'notched' configuration on the audiogram. This notched pattern indicates that noise is a contributing factor to the hearing loss.

NORMAL (N)

Any test not falling to either the 'Abnormal' or 'Early Warning' category is categorized as 'Normal'. The recorded hearing levels are not poor enough to warrant medical attention, nor does the pattern of hearing suggest noise related hearing loss is present.

2. Periodic tests (annual retests):

ABNORMAL CHANGE (AC)

A test showing at least a 15 dB additional hearing loss at two adjacent frequencies between test dates warrants medical attention. The deterioration may be due to medical causes unrelated to noise exposure.

EARLY WARNING CHANGE (EWC)

A test showing at least one 15 dB change in hearing, in either ear, at 3000 *or* 4000 Hz from the previous test. This result indicates the presence of ongoing noise-induced hearing loss and requires attention by the individual, the technician, and the employer to determine the cause in order to prevent further damage. Hearing protection should be evaluated carefully for correct selection, fit, and condition.

NORMAL CHANGE (NC)

Any test not categorized as AC or EWC is 'Normal Change'. There has been no significant deterioration, or worsening, in hearing levels since the last test. Note: this category does not indicate absolute hearing levels, only that hearing levels have not deteriorated significantly.