



WORKING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Hearing Loss Prevention  
Prevention and Occupational Disease Initiatives  
WES Division  
604 276-3090  
Toll Free 1 888 621-7233, ext. 3090  
Fax: 604 276-3106

# **Hearing Loss Prevention Section**

## **Administration Procedures: Industrial Audiometry**

## **1.0 The Board's Authority**

Under the *Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Regulation 7.8* of British Columbia employers must ensure that only “ a hearing tester authorized by the Board” administers annual hearing tests.

The Hearing Loss Prevention Section of the WES Division has the responsibility and authority to determine who is authorized to conduct hearing tests under the *Regulation* in the following ways:

1. sets standards for the conduct of Industrial Audiometric Technicians (IATs), regarding administration of hearing tests, the equipment and facilities used, and
2. sets requirements for becoming authorized to test, reviews candidates to become authorized and certifies those who meet the requirements, and
3. monitors the conduct of IATs, administration of tests, and the management of test records, and
4. where the Board's standards are not met, suspends or removes authorization after providing to the person concerned an opportunity to respond.

## **2.0 Minimum Requirements for an Approved Testing Facility (Fixed or Mobile)**

1. Testing space must be a self-contained room or area of at least 50 square feet (8' x 6 1/4'). Maximum number of booths per testing space is 2. If more than 2 booths are proposed, there must be self-contained suites with separate entrances for each testing space containing 2 booths. Effective January 1, 1995 any new 2-booth van **or van sold** for use in BC must have a separate space to permit private individual counseling of workers. Privacy may not be achieved by leaving another worker inside a test booth or by sending a worker outside the facility to await their turn for counseling.
2. Sound-treated rooms must be used to ensure maximum background noise levels are not exceeded according to the American National Standards Institute standard ANSI S3.1-1999. A commercially available booth may be required to meet the Standard. The room door must be able to open a full 90 degrees.
3. Audiometer(s) must meet the current standard (ANSI S3.6-2004) for at least Type 4.
4. Minimum of one double power outlet for each booth and audiometer (booth must be plugged directly into outlet).
5. Table or desk in testing space for paperwork and counseling of workers.
6. Minimum of three chairs available per testing space (one in booth, one for IAT, one for worker during counseling). Bench type seats may be used.
7. Facility location should be as far away as possible from uncontrolled noise sources; additional acoustical treatment of hearing test room walls, ceiling, floor, doors and windows may be required if a location remote from interfering noise cannot be found.
8. Samples of Hearing Protection Devices HPD(s) typically provided by a firm must be available for use by the IAT in counseling workers on fit, care and use of HPD. The samples may be mounted on a display board or may be stored in a drawer or box.
9. Certificates of currently authorized IAT(s) must be posted in the testing area. Testing is not permitted by persons with expired certificates.
- 10. Insert earphones and circumaural domes are prohibited.**
11. Lighting, heating and ventilation must be appropriate for size of space.
12. Maintenance of facility approval requires proof of annual audiometer calibration, conducted by a service provider acceptable to the Hearing Loss Prevention Section. Be prepared to submit proof of calibration upon request.

### **3.0 Additional Facility Requirements for Hearing Test Contractors**

1. To ensure an adequate variety of hearing protection for proper counseling of workers throughout the province at least one of each of the following types must be on display in all contractor facilities.
  - Class A and Class B Earmuffs (including helmet mount sample)
  - Compressible Earplugs
  - Pre-formed Reusable Earplugs
  - Custom Molded Earplugs
  - Canal Caps/Headband Plugs

The samples may be mounted on a display board or may be stored in a drawer or box.

2. **Noise monitors are required in all mobile hearing test facilities.** The noise monitor shall be calibrated by an approved audiometric supplier and installed for easy viewing by the IAT to indicate when testing must be interrupted. Noise monitor use is required for every test site and a log must be completed to document its use. The monitor must be capable of ensuring that the maximum permissible ambient noise levels (MPANLS) inside the test booth, per ANSI Standard S3.1-1999, are not exceeded during testing.

The MPANLS for industrial testing are as follows:

125	250	500	1000	2000	4000	8000	Hertz
49.0	35.0	21.0	26.0	34.0	37.0	37.0	decibels (dB)

3. Testing in remote locations without a sound booth is allowed only with prior approval by the Hearing Loss Prevention Occupational Audiologist. Background noise level measurements must confirm the acoustic environment meets the requirements of the ANSI S3.1-1999 Standard. A sound level meter capable of measuring octave bands, or a noise monitor, shall monitor acoustic environment sound levels. A log documenting the background noise levels must be completed and submitted with the hearing tests. Tests conducted in this manner must be submitted separately to the attention of the Occupational Audiologist.
4. Mobile facility stability must be adequate. Stabilizing jacks may be necessary during testing.
5. Access to the facility must meet general safety requirements. A handrail on the outside is usually required for mobile facilities.
6. Mobile facilities are inspected by the Hearing Loss Prevention Occupational Audiologist. All new facilities must be inspected prior to any use (see also requirements on following pages). Repeat inspections are at the O.A.'s discretion. Contractors may be required to present their mobile facilities to an officer of WorkSafeBC for this inspection.

## **4.0 Approval Process for a New Audiometric Facility and/or New Hearing Test Contractor**

1. Applicant submits signed application form (see Page 7) - with DETAILED floor plan attached - including brand and model of booth(s) and audiometer(s) to be used. Additional information may be requested by the Occupational Audiologist.
  - 1a. In the case of the purchase of an existing audiometric facility, the new owner should contact the Occupational Audiologist to determine approval status of the facility prior to purchase.
2. Written approval to proceed given by the Occupational Audiologist at the Hearing Loss Prevention Section. Only with written approval should the contractor engage in construction of a new, or any modification of an existing, hearing test facility. This approval may be in the form of an e-mail communication.
3. Applicant registers in and successfully completes Industrial Audiometric Technician Training Course delivered by the British Columbia Institute of Technology.
4. Applicant submits completed “Application for Authorization” form for all IATs to the Occupational Audiologist. Alternatively, if currently authorized IATs are employed, inform the O.A. of their names in writing.
5. Inspection of audiometric facility carried out by, or under the direction, of the Occupational Audiologist. Any deficiencies noted must be remediated.
6. Occupational Audiologist issues WorkSafeBC decal approving facility for one year.
7. Occupational Audiologist issues written report confirming facility approval.
8. Contractor number issued by WorkSafeBC Hearing Loss Prevention Section. This number is unique and must be used on all hearing tests.
9. If the contractor wishes to participate in the WorkSafeBC “construction industry payment program”, then the contractor must contact the Occupational Audiologist to discuss details. Amongst other requirements, registration with WorkSafeBC is necessary. An exchange of written contracts is required.

## 5.0 Advertising by Hearing Test Contractors

Recommended wording to describe the minimum qualifications of an authorized industrial hearing test providers is as follows:

*Authorized to conduct industrial hearing tests under the BC Occupational Health & Safety Regulation.*

The name "Workers' Compensation Board of British Columbia", its acronym (WCB), the name "WorkSafeBC", "HearSafe", and any logos are protected by legislation. **Their unauthorized use is prohibited.**

The audiometric contractor business name must be the most prominent part of the sign or advertisement.

**APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF NEW AUDIOMETRIC FACILITY**

COMPANY NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

OWNER/CONTACT PERSON: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

FAX #: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE #: \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

FACILITY TYPE (check one): \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile \_\_\_\_\_ Fixed (office)

DETAILED FLOOR PLAN: \_\_\_\_\_ ATTACHED \_\_\_\_\_ TO FOLLOW

Equipment Specifications (attach an extra sheet if necessary):

1. Audiometer(s)

Manufacturer: \_\_\_\_\_ Model: \_\_\_\_\_

Manufacturer: \_\_\_\_\_ Model: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Booth(s)

Manufacturer: \_\_\_\_\_ Model: \_\_\_\_\_

Manufacturer: \_\_\_\_\_ Model: \_\_\_\_\_

**Statement of Agreement:**

I/We have read the requirements for approval of audiometric facilities and authorization of persons to do industrial hearing testing.

I/We understand and accept responsibility for following the approval process for the facility and **will not begin construction of any facility** without PRIOR WRITTEN approval from the Occupational Audiologist of the WorkSafeBC Hearing Loss Prevention Section.

Signature(s) of owner(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of owner(s) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **6.0 Authorization To Conduct Industrial Hearing Tests**

### **6.1 Initial Authorization**

Authorization is restricted to individuals sponsored by either:

- a. a firm under WorkSafeBC occupational health & safety inspectional jurisdiction with an in-house hearing testing program, or
- b. an authorized hearing test contractor (a business that provides hearing tests on a fee-for-service basis to BC industry).

To become an authorized Industrial Audiometric Technician, a person must successfully complete an Industrial Audiometric Technician Training Course, pass a written and a practical examination, and submit a completed “Application for Authorization” form. Maximum initial period of authorization is one year.

- c. a hearing aid dispenser (provider) who has a current contract, in good standing, to provide hearing aids to WorkSafeBC claimants. Dispensers must still successfully complete the Industrial Audiometric Training course delivered by BCIT, however, their fixed (or office) based audiometric facilities will not require an in-person inspection. The following must be provided for the facility to be approved without an inspection:
  - i. electro-acoustic calibration certificates dated within the previous 12 months, conducted in accordance with ANSI S.3.6-2004.
  - ii. detailed floor plan of facility
  - iii. evidence of a hearing protection display

### **6.2 Maintenance of Authorization**

To maintain authorization, Industrial Audiometric Technicians must attend and successfully complete a 1-day Refresher Course at regular intervals. The first Refresher Course is taken one year after the initial Training Course. Thereafter, the usual interval of authorization is two years. This may be altered at the discretion of the Occupational Audiologist.

Extensions to the authorization interval may be granted by the Occupational Audiologist upon submission of a “Request for Extension to Industrial Audiometric Technician Authorization”. However, to obtain an extension, an applicant must have a specific date of a Refresher Course that they plan to register in.

If more than two (2) years has elapsed between the expiry of an Industrial Audiometric Technician’s authorization and the contemplation of completing a Refresher course, a complete Training Course must be completed instead to re-establish authorization.

### **6.3 Removal of Authorization**

Complaints against, or evidence of inappropriate activity by, an Industrial Audiometric Technician, will be investigated by the WorkSafeBC Occupational Audiologist. The Industrial Audiometric Technician will be notified in writing of the results of the investigation and provided an opportunity to respond. Authorization to test may be suspended or rescinded by the Senior Manager of Prevention and Occupational Disease Initiatives, with or without conditions, if the results of the investigation so warrant.

Proscribed activities include, but are not limited to:

- representing oneself as WorkSafeBC or as having authority to enforce the *WorkSafeBC Occupational Health & Safety Regulation*,
- advising workers of the possible acceptance of a WorkSafeBC Hearing Loss Claim,
- violating confidentiality of hearing test/medical information,
- advising workers about the need for a hearing aid,
- recommending exclusively a specific brand of hearing protection where a potential for conflict of interest exists.

Appeal of a decision by the Senior Manager, Prevention and Occupational Disease Initiatives, to suspend or rescind authorization may be made in writing to the Director WES Division.

## 7.0 Hearing Test Data

### *Maintenance of Hearing Test Records*

*Occupational Health & Safety Regulation*, Section 7.9 specifies that “the employer must keep records of the annual hearing test results for each worker, which must...be kept confidential and not released to anyone without the written permission of the worker, or as otherwise required by law”.

Hearing test contractors must obtain a written release from client firms if the contractor is to maintain hearing test records on behalf of the firm. It is the **client's option** whether to keep records on their own premises or with the contractor.

If the arrangement between the client firm and the hearing test contractor terminates for any reason, the contractor must return **all** individual hearing test results, whether written or electronic, to the client firm, at the contractor's cost.

In addition, client firms may request any or all of their employees' past records and this request must be honoured immediately.