

# Prevention Update



## AUDIOMETRIC TESTING

If you are exposed to too much noise in the workplace – even for short periods of time – you can lose your hearing over time.

### Employer Responsibilities

Under Part 8 of PEI's Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) General Regulations, employers must establish a hearing conservation program when noise exposure limits are exceeded.

Section 8.8(f) of the OHS General Regulations requires employers to include hearing tests, known as audiometric testing, in their noise control and hearing conservation programs.

This test plays a crucial role in monitoring and preventing hearing damage. It helps detect workplace hearing loss which is different from natural hearing loss which happens because of aging.

Work-related hearing loss often follows extended exposure to workplace noise, while age-related hearing loss happens more gradually and in both ears. An audiometric test helps by identifying these differences and helps to determine if hearing loss is work-related.

### Who performs audiometric tests?

Section 8.9(2) of the OHS General Regulations says that audiometric tests are performed by an audiologist or a person who is certified to conduct audiometric testing.

Employers must make sure that a person who is certified to conduct audiometric testing has received formal training in audiometry, certification in hearing assessment, knowledge of noise exposure analysis, and the proper use of audiometric equipment.

### The Audiometric Test

- **Who gets tested?** Workers who are exposed to excessive noise levels.
- **When?** A baseline test must be conducted within six months of starting employment, followed by testing at least once every 12 months. The ideal time to test is before a worker's shift begins or after 14 hours of non-exposure.
- **Where?** Tests can be done on-site using a sound-treated booth, at an off-site or mobile testing units with sound-treated booth(s) or at an audiology clinic.
- **Who pays for the test?** The employer is responsible for paying all audiometric testing costs.



As part of the audiometric test, a worker should expect to receive guidance about the need, use, maintenance, and replacement of hearing protection.

### During the Test

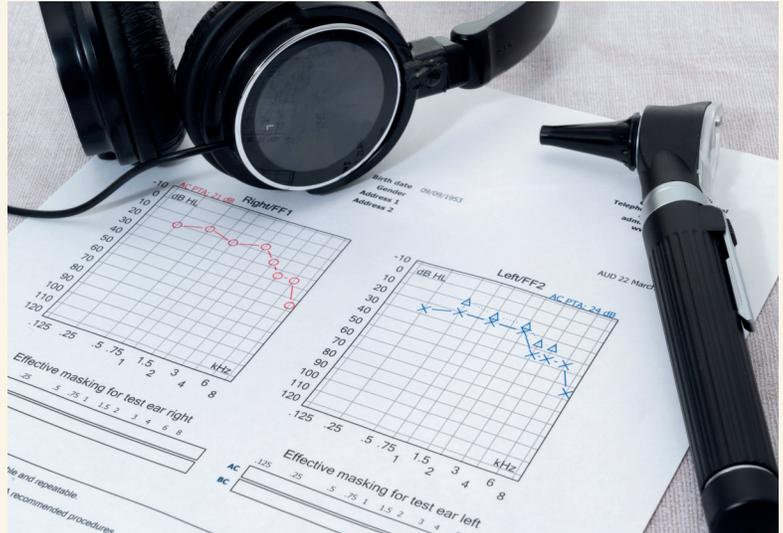
1. The worker sits in a quiet area and wears headphones.
2. A series of tones at different pitches are played.
3. The worker signals when they hear each tone.
4. Results are recorded on a chart called an audiogram which tracks hearing changes over time.

### Test Results

The test results will typically be classified as normal or abnormal.

If a worker's test result is normal, no further testing is required until the next annual test.

If a worker's test result is abnormal, the audiometric technician may ask the worker for additional medical history and advise the worker to follow up with an appropriate medical professional for more in-depth testing.



**Employers must keep audiometric testing records for the duration of the worker's employment.**

### Additional Support

The WCB's OHS Division has an Occupational Hygienist on staff who can provide guidance upon request. Although the Occupational Hygienist does not perform audiometric tests, they help with implementing effective noise control measures.

They also make sure that employers comply with audiometric testing requirements to protect their workers' hearing health. The Occupational Hygienist can help evaluate noise risks, implement protective measures, interpret test results and recommend strategies to prevent further hearing loss.

For more information about audiometric testing please see our **Developing a Hearing Conservation Program** guide which can be found at [wcb.pe.ca](http://wcb.pe.ca).