



United States Department of Transportation Hearing Acuity Requirements

United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) regulations require operators of most commercial motor vehicles to meet certain physical prerequisites. Hearing acuity is but one.

Hearing acuity requirements are stated in *Title 49-TRANSPORTATION; CHAPTER III--FEDERAL MOTOR CARRIER SAFETY ADMINISTRATION, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION PART 391--QUALIFICATIONS OF DRIVERS; Subpart E-Physical Qualifications and Examinations.*

USDOT hearing acuity pass/fail criteria requires drivers to hear a forced whispered voice in the better ear at not less than 5 feet with or without the use of a hearing aid. The validity and reliability of this whisper test is seriously suspect, as it relies on the test administrator to make subjective pass/fail decisions based upon their ability to hear the reply-more so if the test administrator suffers from hearing loss him/herself.

Preferably relying upon the more valid and reliable audiometric testing procedure, passing candidates must indicate an average hearing loss in the better ear no greater than 40 decibels at 500 Hz, 1,000 Hz, and 2,000 Hz *with or without a hearing aid*. The phrase "*with or without a hearing aid*" regrettably illustrates the government's failure to know that pure tone thresholds are not obtained on aided test subjects.

A better test measure for aided test subjects is to arrange a visit to a local audiologist so that an aided speech reception threshold (SRT) measure may be received. An aided SRT is derived by simply presenting speech through loudspeakers in sound attenuated booth to determine the lowest level at which a test subject can consistently understand speech. A speech reception threshold of 40 dB would seem to meet the USDOT pass criteria.

T K Group is often asked if forklift operators fall under DOT regulations. Shocking to some, they are not. OSHA mandates numerous forklift related regulations-*none of which stipulate a hearing acuity requirement for forklift operators.*

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