



Exit Audiograms

Many corporations, as part of their internal Hearing Loss Prevention Program protocol, require “exit” audiograms upon employment termination or re-assignment. Exit audiograms are not mandated in any regulatory noise standard.

In 1998, a NIOSH (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health-OSHA’s research division) released a publication entitled *Criteria for a Recommended Standard* wherein inclusion of exit audiogram protocol as standard procedure in all Hearing Loss Prevention Programs was urged:

[1.6.5] *Exit Audiogram*

“The employer should obtain an exit audiogram from a worker who is leaving employment or whose job no longer involves exposure to hazardous noise. The exit audiogram should be conducted under the same conditions as those of baseline audiometry.”¹

Why conduct exit audiograms or audiograms upon job reassignment?

An audiogram conducted upon job re-assignment is good practice, especially in cases where reassignment takes an employee from a time weighted average (TWA) exposure of 85 dB or above down to a noise exposure level below 85 dB TWA. In such cases, any future audiometric decline thought to be related to unprotected noise exposure would less likely be attributed to occupational noise.

A valid and reliable exit audiogram, shown audiometrically less severe than one conducted post employment and presented in a compensation claim, is most useful in the hands of corporate litigators. While annual documentation is important, a 12 month test gap between annual testing and termination is possible. When a termination date (such as due to retirement) is known in advance, an exit audiogram conducted the same day as termination may prove useful at some later date.

The exit audiogram process presents a great opportunity to foster employee-employer “good will”. The exit audiogram also offers a chance to reinforce the importance of continued hearing loss preventative practices once away from the job that can hopefully enhance quality of life in retirement

¹ 1998 NIOSH *Criteria for a Recommended Standard*



Authored by: Robert Williams, Au.D. | Director Audiology | T K Group, Inc.