

A guide to Noise Induced Hearing Loss

About WorkCover WA

WorkCover WA is the government agency responsible for overseeing the workers compensation and injury management system in Western Australia.

This includes monitoring compliance with the *Workers Compensation and Injury Management Act 2023* (the Act), informing and educating workers, employers and others about workers compensation and injury management and providing an independent dispute resolution system.



Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) and WorkCover WA

Under the Act, workers who have hearing loss that is noise-induced and due to the nature of employment may be entitled to lump sum compensation.

An employer may be required to pay for audiological testing

If a worker is frequently required by an employer to wear hearing protection to prevent hearing loss associated with noise exceeding the exposure standards, the employer is considered to be a 'noisy employer' in accordance with the Act.

The noise exposure standards align with the exposure standards under work health and safety law:

- an LAeq,8h of 85dB(A), or
- an LC,peak of 140dB(C).

Noisy employers must pay for audiological testing if it is requested by a worker who is required to wear hearing protection. This includes any reasonable related expenses and further assessment, if required. An audiological test can be requested and must be paid for once every two years.

A noisy employer is still required to pay for audiological testing if the worker requests a test after leaving their employment and not more than three months have elapsed since the date employment ceased.

What is an audiological test?

An audiological test is conducted by an authorised audiologist who determines whether a worker meets the required threshold for percentage hearing loss (global hearing loss) to proceed to a NIHL assessment. A worker must have 10% hearing loss (5% for a subsequent claim) to proceed with their claim.

What is a NIHL assessment?

If the relevant hearing loss threshold is met, the worker may arrange an appointment with an Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) specialist, authorised by WorkCover WA, for a NIHL assessment to determine the percentage of noise induced hearing loss. This is paid for by the employer required to pay for the audiological test. If 10% NIHL is identified (or 5% NIHL for a subsequent claim), the worker is eligible to make a claim for NIHL and receive compensation.

Need further assistance?



Call WorkCover WA's Advice and Assistance Service on
1300 794 744 (8:30am to 4:30pm, Monday to Friday)



Visit workcover.wa.gov.au



Requirements for audiological tests

Audiological testing must be conducted by an audiologist who is authorised by WorkCover WA to conduct testing. A list of authorised service providers can be found on the WorkCover WA website. The testing methodology used by audiologists must meet standards approved and published by the WorkCover WA CEO.

When arranging an audiological test, workers will be asked to provide details of their employer (e.g. contact details, ABN) and whether they have previously made a NIHL claim.

Workers are also required to ensure they are not exposed to more than 80dB(A) for 16 hours prior to the test (the noise level of a vacuum cleaner or heavy road traffic).

What if there is disagreement over the obligation to pay for audiological testing?

If there is disagreement or ambiguity over an employer's obligations to pay for testing, the worker may make a request for WorkCover WA to determine whether an employer is required to pay for an audiological test and NIHL assessment.

Did you know?

Audiologists and ENTs must be authorised to conduct testing and assessments respectively for workers compensation purposes.

NIHL Assessment

NIHL assessments must be conducted by an authorised ENT specialist.

Prior to the NIHL assessment, the worker must complete the Worker Noise Exposure and Employment History approved form and bring it with them to the ENT appointment. This form can be found on the WorkCover WA website.

Test results

Audiological test results and NIHL assessments are maintained and monitored by WorkCover WA and can only be released under circumstances specified in the *Workers Compensation and Injury Management Regulations 2024*.

Noise induced hearing loss claims

A worker may make multiple claims for NIHL over their working life. An initial claim may be made where a worker suffers from 10% or greater NIHL. Any subsequent claims may be made where a worker suffers from 5% or greater NIHL.

Worker may pay for testing

If a worker believes they have suffered from NIHL but their employer is not obligated to pay for testing, the worker may pay for their own audiological test and, where required, NIHL assessment. If the claim is successful, the costs of the claim, including reasonable expenses will be reimbursed to the worker.

Making a claim

If the NIHL assessment confirms the worker meets the required threshold of noise induced hearing loss caused by noise exposure in the workplace, the worker can complete a NIHL Claim Form and submit it to the 'last employer' (as determined by the ENT specialist). The worker must also provide copies of the Audiological Test Report, NIHL Assessment Report and the Worker Noise Exposure and Employment History approved form. The employer must lodge the claim form with their insurer within seven days.

Successful NIHL claims are paid as a lump sum payment. The cost of the claim may be apportioned to other liable employers noted in the worker's employment history upon application by the employer or insurer, where the NIHL was a result of noise exposure with more than one employer.

Compensation cannot be claimed for NIHL which occurred before March 1991.

