

WAC 296-307-638 Summary.

Your responsibility:

This section provides options to baseline audiometric testing for employees assigned to duties with noise exposures for **less than one year**. These program options may also be used to provide added assessment of longer-term employees in addition to audiometric testing.

The requirements of this section apply only if you decide to use auditing or a third-party hearing loss prevention program and do not conduct baseline audiometric testing for those employees.

Hearing Protection Audits

You must:

Conduct hearing protection audits at least quarterly

WAC 296-307-63805

Make sure staff conducting audits are properly trained

WAC 296-307-63810

Assess the hearing protection used by each employee during audits

WAC 296-307-63815

Document your hearing protection audits

WAC 296-307-63820

Third-Party Audiometric Testing

You must:

Make sure third-party hearing loss prevention programs meet the following requirements

WAC 296-307-63825

IMPORTANT:

Hearing protection audits are a tool for use in evaluating your hearing loss prevention program in cases where audiometric testing does not provide a useful measure. For example, if most of your employees are hired on a temporary basis for a few months at a time, audiometric testing may not identify the small changes in hearing acuity that could occur. Auditing provides an alternative to audiometric testing in these cases.

Auditing is not required unless you use it in place of baseline audiometric testing for employees hired for a period of **less than one year** and is permitted as a substitute for audiometric testing only for these employees.

Third-party hearing loss prevention programs are full hearing loss prevention programs and are distinct from audiometric testing provided by third parties as part of your own hearing loss prevention program. These programs may be organized by labor groups, trade associations, labor-management cooperatives, or other organizations to:

- Cover a specific group of employees

OR

- Combine efforts for several employers with common employees.

Although you remain responsible for the program, third-party programs can have at least two benefits over running your own program:

- The audiometric testing is portable between the participating employers so new testing will not be needed when an employee changes employers

- Employees who only work for short periods for any one employer can be monitored under the group program over a longer period of time increasing the effectiveness of the audiometric testing in preventing hearing loss for these employees.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 49.17.010, 49.17.040, 49.17.050, 49.17.060. WSR 05-01-166, § 296-307-638, filed 12/21/04, effective 4/2/05.]