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Recording Occupational Hearing Loss on the OSHA 300 Log

Beginning on January 1, 2003, employers were required to record work-related hearing loss cases when an employee’s hearing test shows a marked decrease in overall hearing. If an employee’s hearing test (audiogram) reveals that the employee has experienced a work-related Standard Threshold Shift (STS) in hearing in one or both ears, and the employee’s total hearing level is 25 decibels (dB) or more below audiometric zero (averaged at 2000, 3000, and 4000 Hz) in the same ear(s) as the STS, you must record the case on the OSHA 300 Log. Employers can make adjustments for hearing loss caused by aging, seek the advice of a physician or licensed health care professional to determine if the loss is work-related, and perform additional hearing tests to verify.

Standard Threshold Shift

A Standard Threshold Shift, or STS, is defined in the occupational noise exposure standard at 29 CFR 1910.95(g)(10)(i) as a change in hearing threshold, relative to the baseline audiogram for that employee, of an average of 10 decibels (dB) or more at 2000, 3000, and 4000 hertz (Hz) in one or both ears. In this case the STS must only be reported to the employee. Please refer to the example below.

Frequency (Hz)	Baseline (dB)	Current Audiogram (dB)	Difference (dB)
2000	10	20	10
3000	5	10	5
4000	15	30	15
Average	10	20	10

STS & a 25-dB Overall Reduction in Hearing Level

If the employee has shown an STS you must then examine the employee's overall hearing ability in comparison to audiometric zero. Using the employee's current audiogram, average the hearing levels at 2000, 3000, and 4000 Hz to determine whether or not the employee's total hearing loss exceeds 25 dB from audiometric zero. In this case the STS must be reported to the employee AND recorded on the OSHA 300 log. Please refer to the example below.

Frequency (Hz)	Baseline (dB)	Current Audiogram (dB)	Difference (dB)
2000	20	30	10
3000	30	35	5
4000	10	25	15
Average	20	30	10

Entering a Hearing Loss Case in the OSHA 300 Log

In 2003, employers should record cases of occupational hearing loss either as an “injury” (single event acoustic trauma) or “other illnesses” (long term noise exposure), as appropriate to the situation. Beginning on January 1, 2004, employers will record these cases in a separate column specifically designated for occupational hearing loss on the OSHA 300 log.