

**Operational
Policy**

Section

Disabilities/Impairments Resulting from Accidents

Subject

Traumatic Hearing Loss

Policy

Workers are entitled to benefits for traumatic hearing loss (THL) that results from a work-related accident.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- recognize THL as a work-related accident, and
- provide guidance on determining the degree of permanent impairment in allowed THL claims.

Guidelines

Definition

~~Traumatic hearing loss (THL)~~ is hearing loss of sudden onset experienced after an acute trauma such as*:

- exposure to noise from an explosion (acoustic trauma)
- direct trauma to the ear causing damage
- trauma to the head resulting in a severe concussion, or
- exposure to an ototoxic (toxic to the ear) drug or chemical.

*Phaneuf, R. and R. Hetu: *An epidemiological perspective of the causes of hearing loss among industrial workers*. J. Otolaryngol. 19:31-40, 1990.

~~Assessing~~ Determining the degree of permanent impairment

Maximum medical recovery (MMR)

The WSIB assesses a worker's permanent impairment from ~~traumatic hearing loss~~ THL when ~~maximum medical recovery (MMR)~~ MMR has occurred ~~(see 11-01-05, Determining Maximum Medical Recovery (MMR)). Since the healing time after a trauma varies considerably—depending on.~~ For more information regarding the ~~type of injury—medical confirmation determination~~ of MMR ~~is needed. A refer to 11-01-05, Determining Permanent Impairment. For THL, usually a period of~~ as long as 6 months to a year ~~since the injury~~ may be required to ensure that MMR has ~~occurred~~ been reached.

Rating schedule

The WSIB rates the worker's permanent impairment using the prescribed rating schedule in the American Medical Association Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment, Third Edition (Revised) (AMA Guides). ~~** The permanent impairment rating is not affected by any improvement in hearing attained with hearing aids testing is done without aids.~~ Average hearing losses are ~~never expressed in whole numbers (not rounded (up or down))~~ before calculating the permanent impairment using the AMA Guides. To determine the final permanent impairment rating when more than one work-related permanent impairment is

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present, the WSIB combines the [permanent impairment](#) ratings for each impairment, using the AMA Guides Combined Values Chart.

*** American Medical Association Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment, Third Edition (Revised).*

~~NEL~~ & ~~pre~~Pre-existing hearing loss [not related to THL](#)

To

[For guidance on how to](#) determine the ~~non-economic loss (NEL) benefit~~[degree of work-related permanent impairment resulting from THL](#) for [those](#) workers who [also](#) have a ~~documented~~[measurable](#) pre-existing hearing loss, ~~the WSIB uses the most recent pre-injury measurement (e.g., audiogram) so it can subtract the percentage permanent impairment of the pre-existing condition from the percentage of the post-injury permanent impairment.~~[condition affecting the same body area, refer to 18-05-03, Determining the Degree of Permanent Impairment.](#)

Occupational noise-induced hearing loss

~~If a worker has pre-existing occupational noise induced hearing loss (NIHL), the WSIB sets up separate claims: one for the NIHL (see 16-01-03, Occupational Noise Induced Hearing Loss, and 16-01-04, Noise Induced Hearing Loss, on/after January 2, 1990); and one for the THL.~~

Age factor

~~If a recent pre-injury audiogram is not available, and workers are over 60 years of age, the WSIB applies a factor for presbycusis (age-related hearing loss) by determining the average decibel (dB) hearing loss at 4 frequencies (500, 1000, 2000 and 3000Hz), and subtracting one-half (0.5) dB from the post-injury permanent hearing loss for every year a worker's age is more than 60.~~

[If a worker has noise-induced hearing loss, refer to 16-01-04, Occupational Noise-Induced Hearing Loss, On/After January 2, 1990 for entitlement guidance.](#)

Application date

This policy applies to all [decisions occurring on or after October 7, 2026, for all](#) accidents occurring on or after January 2, 1990.

Document ~~History~~[history](#)

This document replaces [15-04-01 dated October 12, 2004.](#)

[This document was previously published as:](#)
03-03-02 [dated December 1, 1997.](#)

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References

Legislative ~~Authority~~[authority](#)

Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, ~~as amended~~

Sections 2(1), 13(1), 33, 43, 46, 47, ~~119(1)~~

~~Minute~~

~~Board of Directors~~

~~#8 (I), June 10, 2004, Page 6617~~

Approval