

**Alberta WCB
Policies &
Information**

Chapter:

INJURIES

Subject:

GENERAL

Authorization:

BoD Resolution 96/10/53

Date:

November 26, 1996

APPLICATION 5: HEARING LOSS

1. *Under what conditions is hearing loss compensable?*

When a compensable injury or disease results in a hearing loss, the impairment is compensable.

Hearing loss may be traumatic, noise induced, or both. Traumatic hearing loss is usually sudden or acute and traceable to a specific incident (e.g., a basal skull fracture, exposure to excessive sound pressure levels, etc.). Noise induced hearing loss is the gradual loss of hearing due to prolonged occupational exposure to excessive noise levels.

To be compensable, the noise induced hearing loss must be due, at least in part, to occupational noise exposure while the worker was working in Alberta or was entitled to coverage under WCB-Alberta while working in a place other than Alberta.

2. *What factors may limit WCB's responsibility for a hearing loss claim?*

When a worker with a pre-existing non-compensable hearing loss experiences a degree of compensable hearing loss, WCB determines the value of any permanent disability award based on the part of the overall disability attributable to industrial exposure in Alberta or while the worker was entitled to coverage under WCB-Alberta.

3. *What level of occupational exposure is necessary for a compensable hearing loss claim?*

Unless there is evidence of unusual susceptibility to noise at a lower level, noise induced hearing loss is compensable when there is a clear history of prolonged occupational exposure (usually two or more years). The occupational exposure limits for noise will be based on current Occupational Health & Safety standards.

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- 4. *What level of hearing loss constitutes a permanent disability?***

A compensable hearing loss, traumatic or noise induced, is considered a permanent disability only when specialized testing verifies a summative loss at each of the four speech frequencies (500 Hz, 1000 Hz, 2000 Hz, 3000 Hz in the American National Standards Institute - ANSI -audiometer standards) of at least 140 decibels in one ear.
- 5. *When does WCB provide hearing aids?***

When expert opinion recommends a hearing aid as a means of alleviating, lessening, or eliminating the effects of a compensable hearing loss, WCB will provide the appropriate appliance.
- 6. *How is cost relief applied to hearing loss claims?***

For the appropriate application of cost relief, see Policy 05-02, *Cost Relief*.
- 7. *When is this policy application effective?***

This policy application (Application 5 – Hearing Loss) is effective February 15, 1997, except when noted otherwise in a specific policy section(s).

Previous versions

- [Policy 0301 Part II - August 2015](#)
- [Policy 0301 Part II - January 2004](#)
- [Policy 0301 Part II - June 2002](#)
- [Policy 0301 Part II - June 2001](#)
- [Policy 0301 Part II - December 2000](#)
- [Policy 0301 Part II - March 1999](#)
- [Policy 0301 Part II \(consolidated manual 1st Issue\) - February 1997](#)