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DOEL OHS Regulations Launch Conference

Dr Lucas Mosidi
Head - Medical Management

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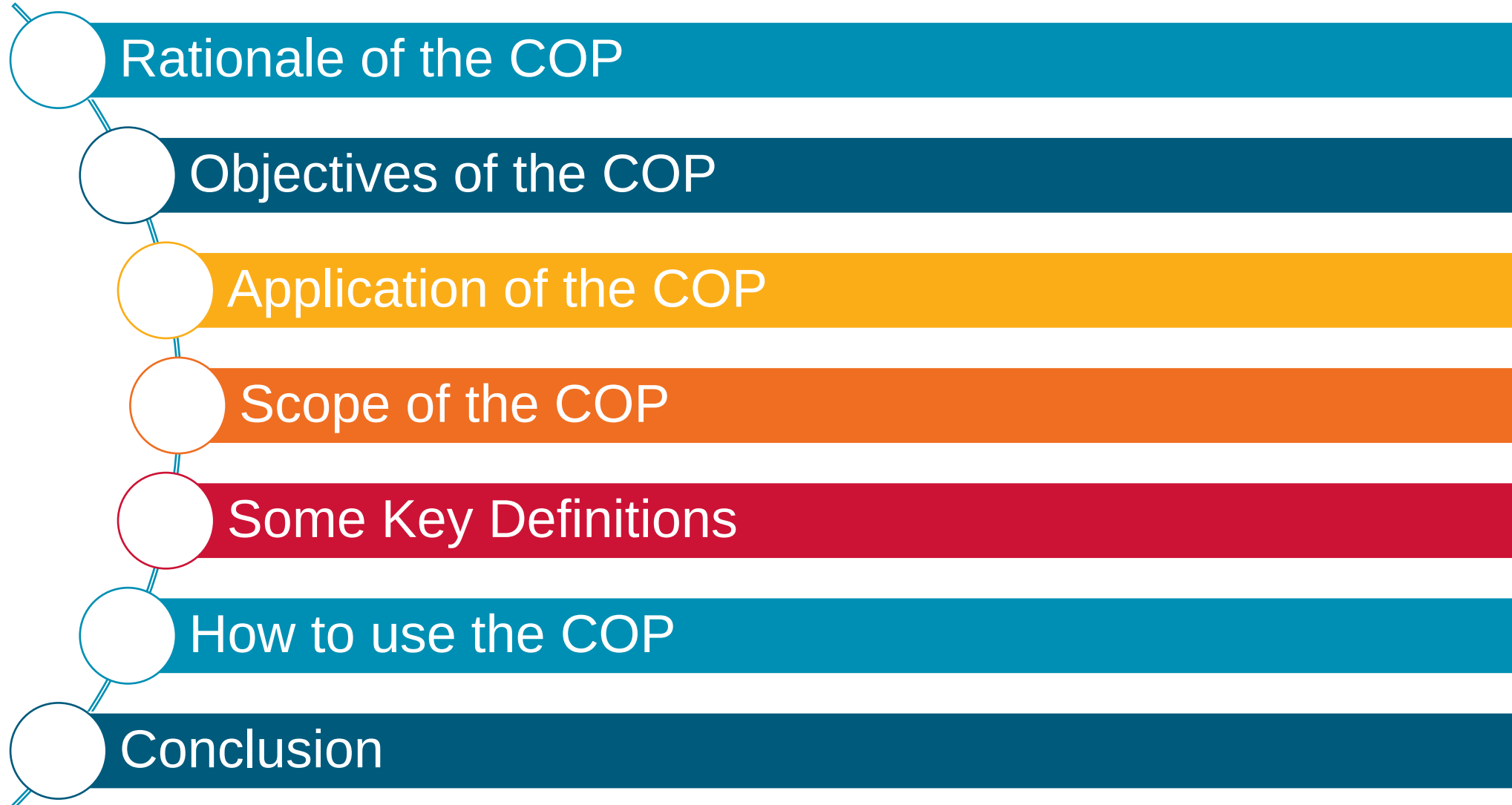


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Noise Exposure Regulations Code of Practice for Audiometry



PRESENTATION OUTLINE



RATIONALE FOR THE COP



The New **Noise Exposure Regulations (NER)** is a move from a reactive approach to addressing occupational hearing loss to a more proactive approach that seeks to prevent the development of and/or deterioration of established Noise-Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL).

An employer is required to establish, implement and maintain a documented system of medical surveillance in terms of regulation 9 of the NER.

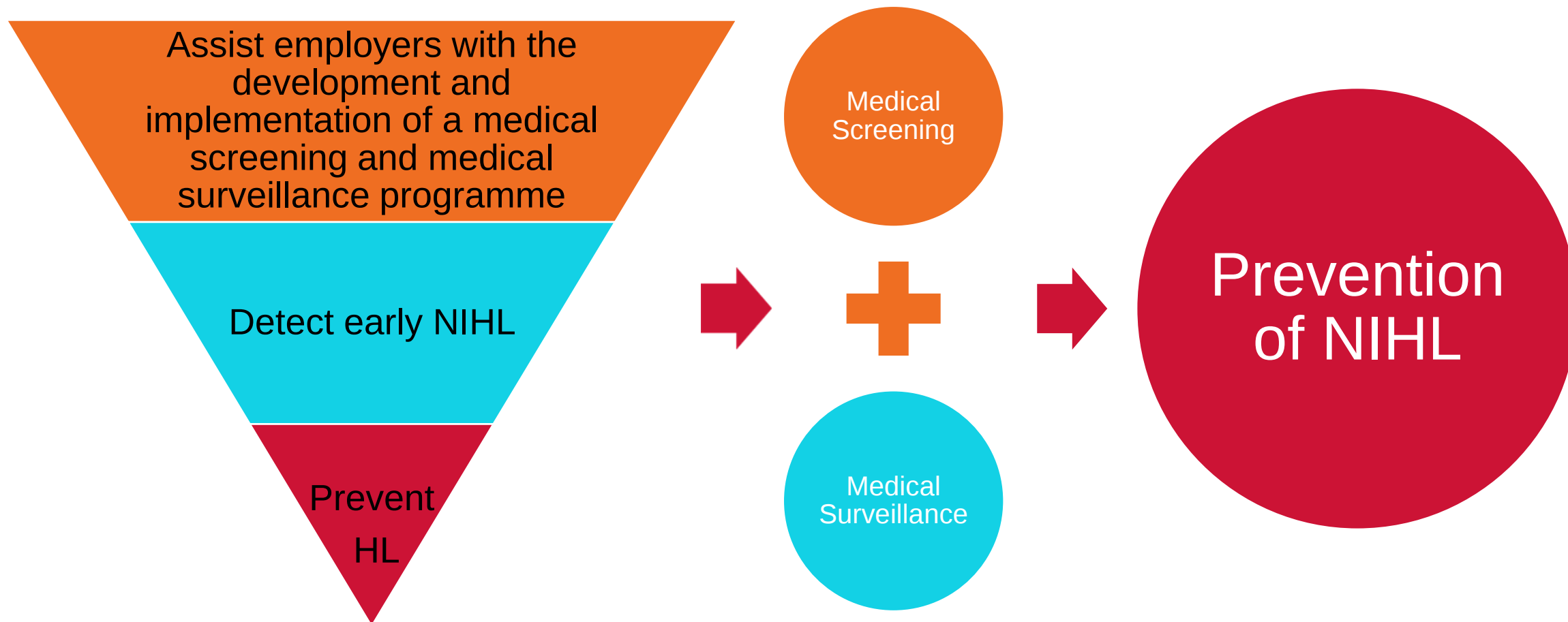
Due to the complex nature of medical screening and medical surveillance with regard to assessing employees' exposure to occupational noise and the resultant effects, a decision was taken by the TC to produce a code of practice for audiometry, incorporated under the new **Noise Exposure Regulations**.

It incorporates all requirements of medical screening and medical surveillance, particularly audiometric testing, in one document.

It is a quick reference guide to assist practitioners and users to follow a structured process when assessing employees exposed to occupational noise and to make appropriate decisions

OBJECTIVES OF THE COP

The objective of the Department of Employment and Labour's Code of Practice for Audiometry in respect of the Noise Exposure Regulations is to:



APPLICATION OF THE COP



This Code of Practice applies to:

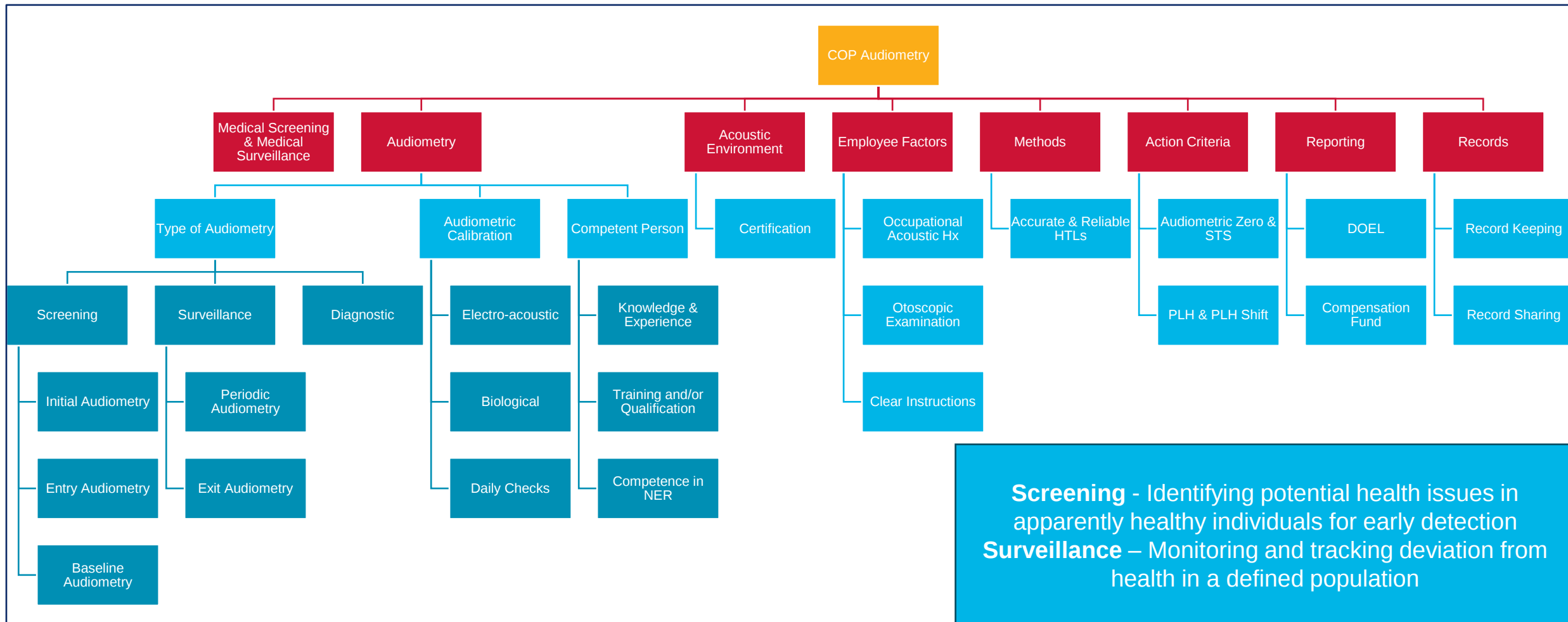
All employers and employees as provided for in:

- The Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993 (Act No. 85 of 1993) (the OHS Act), and the Noise Exposure Regulations promulgated under section 43 of the OHSA.
- The Code is incorporated into the Noise Exposure Regulations of 2024 through regulation 15 of the said regulations and must be used in conjunction with the regulations.

The COP seeks to ensure that audiometry is conducted as part of a structured medical screening and surveillance programme; using the correct audiometric equipment which is calibrated according to prescribed standards and is conducted by a competent person in an acoustic environment that is appropriately certified; on an employee that is correctly selected and informed, so as to produce results that are reliable and accurate which will provide a clear plan of action that will allow for appropriate employee management, correct regulatory reporting and management of records in the best interest of the employee.

SCOPE OF THE COP

The scope of the Code of Practice for Audiometry is aligned with the scope of application of the Noise Exposure Regulations, 2024:



SOME KEY DEFINITIONS

“Competent person: audiometric testing” means

- **(a) for screening audiometry–**
 - (i) a person registered in terms of the Health Professions Act, 1974 (Act No. 56 of 1974), with the Health Professions Council of South Africa in any of the following categories:
 - (aa) ENT (ear, nose and throat specialist);
 - (bb) Speech therapist; or
 - (cc) Audiologist; or
 - (ii) a person with a valid occupational skills certificate: Occupational Audiometric Screener, obtained from an organisation accredited with the Quality Assurance Body that has been delegated the quality assurance responsibilities for Occupational Audiometric Screener unit standards by the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO), established in terms of section 26(1) of the Skills Development Amendment Act, Act No. 37 of 2008, as amended, and registered with an organisation recognised by the Chief Inspector; and
- **(b) for diagnostic audiology–**
 - (i) a person registered in terms of the Health Professions Act, 1974 (Act No. 56 of 1974), with the Health Professions Council of South Africa in any of the following categories:
 - (aa) ENT (ear, nose and throat specialist); or
 - (bb) an Audiologist;

SOME KEY DEFINITIONS

“Competent person” in relation to noise, means a person who

- has, in respect of the work or task to be performed, the required knowledge, training and experience in noise and, where applicable, relevant qualifications specific to or including noise: Provided that where appropriate qualifications and training are registered in terms of the provisions of the National Qualifications Framework Act, 2008 (Act No. 67 of 2008), those qualifications and that training must be regarded as the required qualifications and training; and
- is familiar with the Act and the applicable regulations made under the Act

“Noise zone” means an area, and plant or machinery without a fixed location, where the noise is

- at or above the noise-rating limit; or
- at or above the noise action level where there is concomitant exposure to ototoxic chemical agents and/or whole-body vibration.

SOME KEY DEFINITIONS

“Standard threshold shift or STS” means

- an average change in hearing of 10 dB or more at the frequencies of 2 000, 3 000 and 4 000 Hz in one or both ears, as compared to the employee’s audiometric zero.

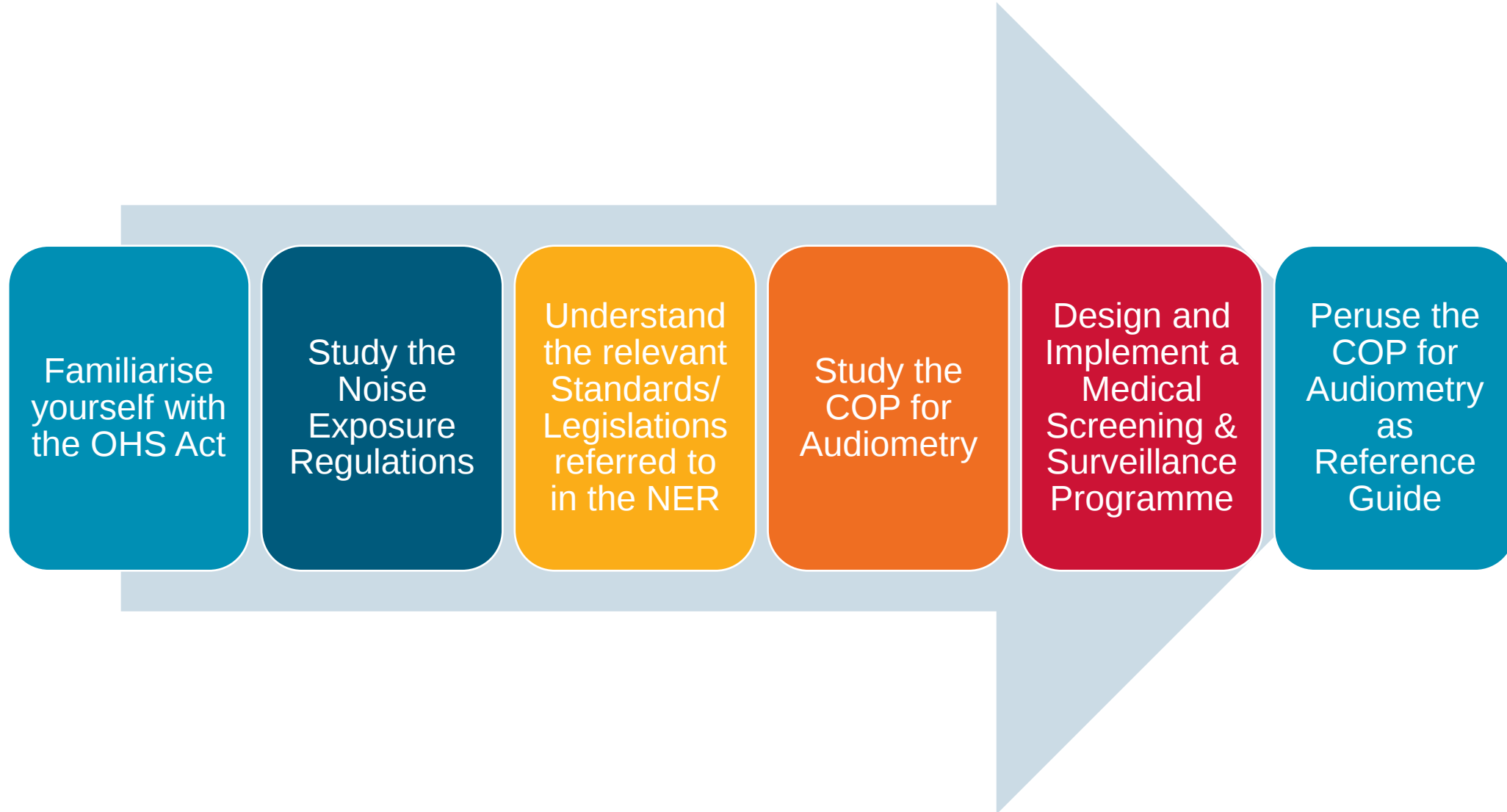
“Audiometric zero” means

- the average hearing threshold at 2 000, 3 000 and 4 000 Hz for each ear calculated from baseline.

“Acoustic environment” means

- a room, booth or mobile facility in which audiometric tests are conducted.

HOW TO USE THE COP



CONCLUSION



- The Minister's Advisory Council for Occupational Health and Safety granted approval for the establishment of a technical committee (TC) to review the Noise-Induced Hearing Loss Regulations of 2003.
- The TC is constituted of members of organised labour, organised business, specialists in the field of occupational health and safety and the Department of Employment and Labour.
- Due to the complex nature of medical screening and medical surveillance with regard to assessing employees' exposure to occupational noise and the resultant effects, a decision was taken by the TC to produce a code of practice for audiometry, incorporated under the new Noise Exposure Regulations.
- This COP for Audiometry is to be used as a reference guide by practitioners and those entrusted with implementing health and safety measures and programmes to prevent and manage NIHL in the workplace
- It is to be used in conjunction with the OHS Act, the NER, as well as other standards and legislations applicable to noise exposure in the workplace.

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Thank You

010 214 3597 | Imosidi@randmutual.co.za