

Instruction No. 171 SUPPLEMENT

Transitional arrangements between Instruction No. 168 and No. 171

Introduction:

This instruction sets out the procedures to be followed to ensure proper management and implementation of Instruction No. 171 as well as a smooth transition from the repealed Instruction No. 168 to the new Instruction No. 171.

Conducting and Recording of a Baseline Audiogram:

1. A baseline audiogram must be conducted on all employees in any working place where the equivalent continuous A – weighted sound pressure level, normalised to an eight hour working day or a forty hour working week, is equal to or exceeds 85 decibels A (dBA).
2. A baseline audiogram must be conducted on every current employee exposed to noise as contemplated in (1) within two years of the date of this Instruction.
3. From the date on which Circular Instruction 171 was published, every new employee exposed to noise as specified in (1) must have a baseline audiogram done within 30 days of commencement of employment.
4. The baseline of an employee conducted in terms of this Instruction applies as that employee's baseline for his total working career.
5. An employee's baseline must be recorded and such record must be kept for 40 years.

Transfer between workplaces or changing employer

1. The baseline audiogram results, as well as the most recent subsequent audiogram conducted whilst in employment, should be given to an employee when he is no longer exposed to noise or leaves employment at that workplace.
2. The baseline audiogram as well as the most recent audiogram with the PLH as calculated, must be presented at employment to the new employer.
3. At recruitment, the new employer must record the baseline as well as the subsequent PLH sustained with the previous employer and the latter may be verified with an initial audiogram at recruitment.

Use of the Baseline Audiogram:

1. The baseline audiogram must be used to calculate any current hearing loss sustained in terms of Instruction No. 168. Where an employee has occupational hearing loss compensatable in terms of Instruction No. 168, referral must be made to the Compensation Commissioner or to the Mutual Association as applicable, for consideration of compensation.
2. The baseline must be recorded for the purpose of using these values for all future reference to the baseline of an employee.
3. The baseline audiogram should then be used in determining any future compensatable hearing loss in terms of Instruction No. 171.
4. Following two years from the date of this Instruction, where there was failure to conduct a baseline of an employee's hearing during these two years, it would be assumed that it was normal for the purposes of the baseline as set out in Instruction No. 171.

Standards for the Baseline Audiogram:

1. Testing for the baseline audiogram must be done 16 hours after an employee has been removed from an environment in which the noise level was equal to or exceeded 85 dBA. The use of hearing protection devices to effect this attenuation will not be acceptable.
2. The baseline audiogram is the better of the employee's two audiograms performed on the same day and that do not differ from each other by more than 10 dB for any of the following measured test frequencies, i.e. 0.5, 1, 2, 3, and 4 kilohertz (kHz).
3. If it is impossible to obtain two audiograms that comply with the requirements of (2), the employee must be referred to a competent person to establish baseline-hearing levels.
4. If it is impossible for the competent person to establish baseline-hearing levels as contemplated in (2), the competent person may establish baseline-hearing levels by using other techniques, such as speech reception thresholds.

This instruction supplements Instruction No. 171.

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