



Occupational Hearing Conservationist Scope of Practice

Hearing Health History

Before the occupational hearing conservationist (OHC) performs the air-conduction hearing test, it is important to obtain a thorough hearing health history. This information helps determine the need for a medical referral or work-related determination

Visual Inspection of the Ear

Before performing audiometric testing, visually inspect the ear to rule out conditions (eg, cerumen impaction) that might interfere with testing or earplug fitting

Audiometric Testing

Audiometric testing includes baseline, annual testing and retesting on a manual or microprocessor audiometer

Screening Audiograms

The OHC is responsible for identifying problem audiograms for review by an audiologist, physician or otolaryngologist who is a Council for Accreditation of Occupational Hearing Conservation (CAOHC) Professional Supervisor for the Audiometric Program (PS/A)

Employee Referral

The OHC may need to refer employees to medical sources for further audiometric testing or medical treatment

Audiometric Equipment Maintenance

Audiometric equipment maintenance includes ensuring that functional checks of the audiometer and booth are conducted before use each day. The OHC is also responsible for ensuring that the audiometer is calibrated annually and that related equipment logs and forms are updated regularly

Employee Notification of a Standard Threshold Shift (STS)

The OHC must ensure that employees are notified in writing within 21 days identification of an STS. The OHC also refits or retrains employees in the appropriate use of their hearing protection devices.

Recordkeeping

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the OHC must ensure that the employer maintains accurate records of all employee exposure measurements and audiometric tests (see OSHA Guidance 29 CFR 1910.95 (m)1-5 for more information)

Education, Training and Counseling

Although the OHC works primarily with those in the hearing conservation program (HCP), education and training can extend outside the program (plant managers, office personnel). Training and education must cover the following areas:

- The effects of noise on hearing
- The purpose of hearing protection and their use and care
- The purpose of the annual hearing test and explanation of test procedures

Hearing Protection Education

The OHC provides specific education regarding hearing protection in these areas:

- Selection appropriate for the environmental noise level
- Fitting to the individual user
- Supervision of usage compliance
- Use and care (cleaning) of hearing protection equipment

Limitations

OHC certification has limitations. Certification and training don't prepare individuals (unless a licensed audiologist, physician or otolaryngologist) to:

- Assume the role of a PS/A
- Assume the role of an instructor of other noncertified medical personnel
- Interpret audiograms
- Conduct audiometric testing other than air conduction (eg, bone conduction testing, speech audiometry)
- Diagnose hearing disorders
- Independently evaluate HCP effectiveness
- Conduct noise surveys and analyses or be responsible for noise-control solution