

(5) Allow the miner to choose a different hearing protector(s), if wearing the selected hearing protector(s) is subsequently precluded due to medical pathology of the ear.

(b) The mine operator must ensure, after satisfying the requirements of paragraph (a) of this section, that a miner wears a hearing protector whenever the miner's noise exposure exceeds the permissible exposure level before the implementation of engineering and administrative controls, or if the miner's noise exposure continues to exceed the permissible exposure level despite the use of all feasible engineering and administrative controls.

(c) The mine operator must ensure, after satisfying the requirements of paragraph (a) of this section, that a miner wears a hearing protector when the miner's noise exposure is at or above the action level, if:

(1) The miner has incurred a standard threshold shift; or

(2) More than 6 months will pass before the miner can take a baseline audiogram.

§ 62.170 Audiometric testing.

The mine operator must provide audiometric tests to satisfy the requirements of this part at no cost to the miner. A physician or an audiologist, or a qualified technician under the direction or supervision of a physician or an audiologist must conduct the tests.

(a) *Baseline audiogram.* The mine operator must offer miners the opportunity for audiometric testing of the miner's hearing sensitivity for the purpose of establishing a valid baseline audiogram to compare with subsequent annual audiograms. The mine operator may use an existing audiogram of the miner's hearing sensitivity as the baseline audiogram if it meets the audiometric testing requirements of § 62.171 of this part.

(1) The mine operator must offer and provide within 6 months of enrolling the miner in a hearing conservation program, audiometric testing which results in a valid baseline audiogram, or offer and provide the testing within 12 months where the operator uses mobile test vans to do the testing.

(2) The mine operator must notify the miner to avoid high levels of noise for at least 14 hours immediately preceding the baseline audiogram. The mine operator must not expose the miner to workplace noise for the 14-hour quiet period before conducting the audiometric testing to determine a baseline audiogram. The operator may substitute the use of hearing protectors for this quiet period.

(3) The mine operator must not establish a new baseline audiogram or a new revised baseline audiogram, where one has been established, due to changes in enrollment status in the hearing conservation program. The mine operator may establish a new baseline or revised baseline audiogram for a miner who is away from the mine for more than 6 consecutive months.

(b) *Annual audiogram.* After the baseline audiogram is established, the mine operator must continue to offer subsequent audiometric tests at intervals not exceeding 12 months for as long as the miner remains in the hearing conservation program.

(c) *Revised baseline audiogram.* An annual audiogram must be deemed to be a revised baseline audiogram when, in the judgment of the physician or audiologist:

(1) A standard threshold shift revealed by the audiogram is permanent; or (2) The hearing threshold shown in the annual audiogram indicates significant improvement over the baseline audiogram.

§ 62.171 Audiometric test procedures.

(a) All audiometric testing under this part must be conducted in accordance with scientifically validated procedures. Audiometric tests must be pure tone, air conduction, hearing threshold examinations, with test frequencies including 500, 1000, 2000, 3000, 4000, and 6000 Hz. Each ear must be tested separately.

(b) The mine operator must compile an audiometric test record for each miner tested. The record must include:

(1) Name and job classification of the miner tested;

(2) A copy of all of the miner's audiograms conducted under this part;

(3) Evidence that the audiograms were conducted in accordance with paragraph (a) of this section;

(4) Any exposure determination for the miner conducted in accordance with § 62.110 of this part; and

(5) The results of follow-up examination(s), if any.

(c) The operator must maintain audiometric test records for the duration of the affected miner's employment, plus at least 6 months, and make the records available for inspection by an authorized representative of the Secretary of Labor.

§ 62.172 Evaluation of audiograms.

(a) The mine operator must:

(1) Inform persons evaluating audiograms of the requirements of this part and provide those persons with a copy of the miner's audiometric test records;

(2) Have a physician or an audiologist, or a qualified technician who is under the direction or supervision of a physician or audiologist:

(i) Determine if the audiogram is valid; and

(ii) Determine if a standard threshold shift or a reportable hearing loss, as defined in this part, has occurred.

(3) Instruct the physician, audiologist, or qualified technician not to reveal to the mine operator, without the written consent of the miner, any specific findings or diagnoses unrelated to the miner's hearing loss due to occupational noise or the wearing of hearing protectors; and

(4) Obtain the results and the interpretation of the results of audiograms conducted under this part within 30 calendar days of conducting the audiogram.

(b)(1) The mine operator must provide an audiometric retest within 30 calendar days of receiving a determination that an audiogram is invalid, provided any medical pathology has improved to the point that a valid audiogram may be obtained.

(2) If an annual audiogram demonstrates that the miner has incurred a standard threshold shift or reportable hearing loss, the mine operator may provide one retest within 30 calendar days of receiving the results of the

audiogram and may use the results of the retest as the annual audiogram.

(c) In determining whether a standard threshold shift or reportable hearing loss has occurred, allowance may be made for the contribution of aging (presbycusis) to the change in hearing level. The baseline, or the revised baseline as appropriate, and the annual audiograms used in making the determination should be adjusted according to the following procedure:

(1) Determine from Tables 62-3 or 62-4 the age correction values for the miner by:

(i) Finding the age at which the baseline audiogram or revised baseline audiogram, as appropriate, was taken, and recording the corresponding values of age corrections at 2000, 3000, and 4000 Hz;

(ii) Finding the age at which the most recent annual audiogram was obtained and recording the corresponding values of age corrections at 2000, 3000, and 4000 Hz; and

(iii) Subtracting the values determined in paragraph (c)(1)(i) of this section from the values determined in paragraph (c)(1)(ii) of this section. The differences calculated represent that portion of the change in hearing that may be due to aging.

(2) Subtract the values determined in paragraph (c)(1)(iii) of this section from the hearing threshold levels found in the annual audiogram to obtain the adjusted annual audiogram hearing threshold levels.

(3) Subtract the hearing threshold levels in the baseline audiogram or revised baseline audiogram from the adjusted annual audiogram hearing threshold levels determined in paragraph (c)(2) of this section to obtain the age-corrected threshold shifts.

§ 62.173 Follow-up evaluation when an audiogram is invalid.

(a) If a valid audiogram cannot be obtained due to a suspected medical pathology of the ear that the physician or audiologist believes was caused or aggravated by the miner's occupational exposure to noise or the wearing of hearing protectors, the mine operator must refer the miner for a clinical-audiological evaluation or an