



HEARING PROTECTOR FIT-TESTING REQUIREMENT IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE – FACT SHEET

INTRODUCTION

- Significant updates to the Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 6055.12 “Hearing Conservation Program” are expected to be published April 2023.
- A significant change is a new requirement for initial hearing protector (HP) fit testing to be conducted for all DOD personnel who have documented noise exposure greater than or equal to 95 dBA 8-hour time-weighted average (TWA) and who are enrolled in a service hearing conservation program (HCP).



WHAT IS HP FIT TESTING?

- HP fit testing is a procedure used to quantitatively measure the amount of noise reduction a specific hearing protector is providing a user.
- HP fit testing measures the personal attenuation rating (PAR) specific to each individual ear and hearing protector.
- The PAR is a real-world measurement of the overall attenuation the hearing protector provides the individual's ear.



WHY SHOULD HP FIT TESTING BE CONDUCTED?

- Identify workers at risk for noise-induced hearing loss due to inadequate hearing protector fit
- Properly select worker's hearing protectors to meet individual and environmental needs
- “Train-the-trainer” to better match hearing protectors to meet individual worker needs
- Train workers to properly fit and use hearing protectors
- Increase self-efficacy among workers who must wear hearing protectors

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WHY SHOULD HP FIT TESTING BE CONDUCTED?

- Improve training outcomes by providing real-time feedback and documentation
- Motivate workers to consistently use hearing protectors in noisy environments
- Optimize maintenance of hearing protector inventories; potentially reduce costs
- Comply with DoDI 6055.12 and OSHA policy requirements for fitting hearing protectors, providing training, and maintaining records

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WHY SHOULD HP FIT TESTING BE CONDUCTED?

- Evaluate hearing conservation program effectiveness
- Reduce noise-induced hearing loss for those enrolled in HCPs



WHO WILL RECEIVE FIT-TESTING AND WHEN?

- All DOD personnel enrolled in their service HCP and exposed at or above 95 dBA 8-hour TWA will have a hearing protector fit-test at the initial reference audiogram or prior to initial duty in hazardous noise areas or as soon as possible after employment begins.
- When a positive Significant Threshold Shift (STS) is identified on the periodic audiogram. A hearing protector fit-test will be used to evaluate the hearing protection devices, confirm adequacy of fit, and PAR for the noise environment.
- When physical changes to a person's ear canal cause poor fit of assigned hearing protection devices.

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WHO WILL RECEIVE FIT-TESTING AND WHEN?

- When the primary type of fitted hearing protection device is no longer available (e.g. employee switches from earplugs to ear muffs).
- When a single frequency 15 dB shift at 1000, 2000, 3000, and 4000 Hz occurs.
- *Note: These are the minimum requirements for hearing protector fit-testing in the DOD—services may institute more stringent requirements for hearing protector fit-testing to better meet the needs of their respective HCP.



NEXT STEPS

- Implementation processes will be determined by each service
 - Equipment procurement
 - Personnel training to conduct fit testing
 - Identification of who needs to be fit tested, when to test and where to test them
 - Develop testing process/flow for identified personnel
 - Establish documentation/record keeping processes



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