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MOHS Resources

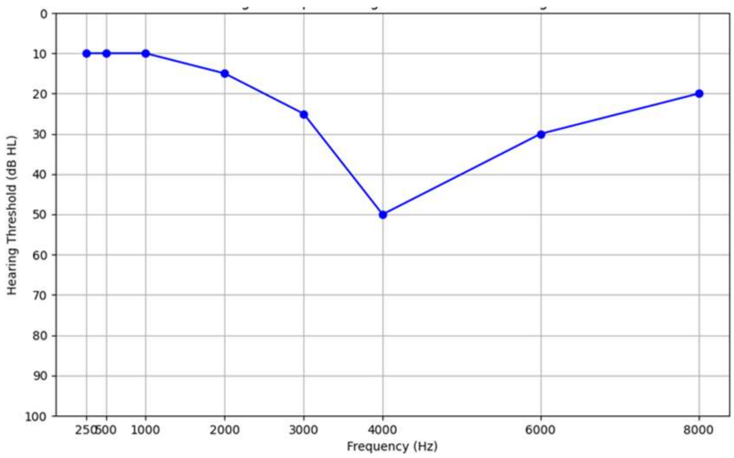
Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL): A Guide for Employees

Introduction

Exposure to high levels of noise (above 85dB), for prolonged periods is likely to cause permanent damage to a person's hearing. This might result in hearing loss and/or tinnitus. The louder the noise and the longer the exposure, the greater the risk.

Mid-range hearing frequencies (3 kHz, 4 kHz & 6 kHz) are more likely to be affected by loud noise as these are the frequencies used for communication and are most sensitive. This type of hearing loss is usually referred to as Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL).

A person suffering with NIHL will often have an audiogram that looks something like the following:



How will I know if my hearing loss is noise induced?

Where identified, a calculation can be performed to confirm that the curve meets the requirements for "Cole's Notch". This criterion is the one most often used to identify NIHL and the criteria usually used in a court of law.

Potential cases of NIHL are passed to an Occupational Health Physician who will review the results and other evidence, decide fitness and inform both the individual and employer of the outcome. In some cases, the physician may wish to review the employee in person before deciding fitness.

If I receive a diagnosis of NIHL, what should I do?

Conserve what hearing you have left.

Comply with local hearing protection requirements.

Continue to participate in hearing test programmes.

Ensure PPE suits your exposure and doesn't over-attenuate.

Consult your GP about hearing aids if communication is difficult.

Is NIHL due to my current job?

Not necessarily. Any sources of excessive noise can contribute towards hearing loss, including exposure to noise in previous jobs, poor compliance with PPE in noisy environments, shooting, motorcycling, listening to loud music (including on your phone & noisy motorsports.

Further Information

https://rnid.org.uk/information-and-support/hearing-loss/types-of-hearing-loss-and-deafness/noise-induced-hearing-loss/.

A copy of this & other documentation can be found from https://mohs.co.uk/resources or using the QR code at the top of this page.