

HEARING CLAIM IN ONE PAGE

HEARING LOSS AND TINNITUS

Hearing loss and tinnitus are separate disabilities with different proof and rating methods. Build each part of the claim separately.

01 The service-connection record

01 CURRENT DISABILITY

Hearing loss must meet 38 C.F.R. 3.385. Recurrent tinnitus may be established through competent evidence.

02 IN-SERVICE EVENT

Document hazardous noise, acoustic trauma, threshold shifts, onset, or another relevant event.

03 MEDICAL RELATIONSHIP

Address service history, post-service noise, onset reports, test results, and competing explanations.

04 SEPARATE EVALUATIONS

Hearing loss uses audiometric tables. Tinnitus has one separate 10 percent schedular evaluation.

02 How the two conditions are evaluated

HEARING LOSS TEST

A state-licensed audiologist must use controlled Maryland CNC speech discrimination and puretone audiometry for rating.

3.385 THRESHOLD

The regulation defines when measured hearing impairment qualifies as a VA disability.

RATING TABLES

Puretone averages and speech scores produce Roman numerals that are combined under Table VII.

TINNITUS

Recurrent tinnitus is rated once under DC 6260, whether perceived in one ear, both ears, or the head.

03 Build one connected evidence record

1 AUDIOGRAMS

Preserve entrance, in-service, separation, VA, employment, and private hearing tests.

2 NOISE HISTORY

Describe weapons, vehicles, aircraft, machinery, hearing protection, duration, and proximity.

3 ONSET AND CONTINUITY

State when hearing difficulty or tinnitus began and how it changed over time.

4 FUNCTIONAL EFFECTS

Explain communication problems, safety issues, localization difficulty, and effects in noise.

5 MEDICAL OPINION

Require analysis of the actual service history and do not rely only on normal hearing at separation.

THE RECORD SHOULD EXPLAIN

Why these facts support this veteran's claim

- What evidence was reviewed
- When the condition and limitations began
- Which legal or medical pathway applies
- How competing explanations were addressed

A conceded noise exposure does not automatically prove nexus. A normal separation audiogram does not, by itself, end the service-connection analysis.

04 Rating snapshot

PTA

Average the thresholds at 1000, 2000, 3000, and 4000 Hz for each ear.

TABLE VI

Combine the puretone average with the Maryland CNC score.

TABLE VIa

Use only when the regulation permits an exceptional pattern or the examiner certifies it.

TABLE VII

Combine the better-ear and poorer-ear Roman numerals for the percentage.

05 Before you file

✓ Current audiology evidence included

✓ Maryland CNC test identified

✓ Post-service noise addressed

✓ Functional effects described

✓ 3.385 threshold confirmed

✓ Military noise history documented

✓ Onset statements consistent

✓ Hearing loss and tinnitus rated separately

