

A Newly, Revamped CSA Standard Is Coming Up

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Well, well, well, another one? What is a **Standard**, anyway?

As per Wikipedia, “A standard is an established norm or requirement in regard to technical systems. It is usually a formal document that establishes uniform engineering or technical criteria, methods, processes and practices.” In Canada, standards are written by experts in a given topic published by the Canadian Standards Association (CSA). Standards are reviewed on a regular basis so users are always receiving the most current guidance.

Now, why are we interested in standards, and what do they have to do with our everyday activities in the world of hearing?

Until recently they were two standards on the subject of hearing screening: the **CAN3-Z107.4-M86** pure tone air conduction audiometers for hearing conservation and for screening and the **CAN/CSA Z107.6-M90 (R2010)** pure tone air conduction threshold audiometry for hearing conservation. The first one was discontinued in 2010, though the content will not be lost and will be contained in the new **Z107.6** that is presently being revised by a CSA Subcommittee.

The **Z107.6** standard, first published in 1975, was revised on several occasions and was reaffirmed in 2001. It is however time to review the content again as well as to expand its scope. It will still deal with requirements for audiometers and testing facilities, and testing protocols. However, new information will include information on how to interpret the test results and will recommend actions to the tested individual and to the person in charge of the Hearing Loss Prevention Program at the workplace.

Let’s take a step back and have a look at the big picture of noise in the workplace. Hearing testing is only one component of a Hearing Conservation Program, or Hearing Loss Prevention Program. CSA is strongly committed to the reduction (or even elimination) of occupational noise induced hearing loss. For that purpose another subcommittee is hard at work preparing an umbrella document, the **CSA Z1007** Hearing Loss Prevention Program Management, intended to provide comprehensive guidance to employers and managers for the management of programs designed to protect individuals exposed to occupational noise. As an important element of the **Z1007** standard, one section is devoted to audiometry. The experts of **Z107.6**’s subcommittee will therefore also provide the information that **Z1007** needs in that respect.

Z1007’s section on audiometry will not detail specifications for audiometers and audiometric booths, and instead will deal with management issues such as how often hearing tests should be conducted, the qualifications necessary for the audiometric tester, as well as how to use the information from the hearing tests to help prevent further hearing loss in the workplace. Whereas **Z1007**, once finished, will be a management tool, the new **Z107.6** will be a stand-alone standard,

containing material exceeding the content of **Z1007**'s audiometry section.