



THE INDUSTRIAL  
COMMISSION OF OHIO

Richard F. Celeste  
Governor

DIVISION OF SAFETY AND HYGIENE

Ocasek Government Office Building  
161 South High Street, Room 403  
Akron, Ohio 44308

PLAINTIFF'S  
EXHIBIT  
BRK-188

March 6, 1990

Legal Section  
Industrial Commission of Ohio  
246 North High Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Re: O.D. 36499-22  
David Metzler  
General Motors Fabrication  
Lordstown, Ohio 44482

Attention: Judy Spencer

Dear Ms. Spencer:

At your request, this report has been prepared based upon information contained in the facsimile file which you have provided and upon additional information provided during a February 20, 1990 meeting with Mr. Ray Hickman, Safety Manager for the General Motors Lordstown Fabrication Plant, where approximately 2600 persons are employed in the fabrication of body parts for various G.M. vehicles. Also present during this meeting, in addition to Mr. Hickman, were Mr. Russ Jones, Union Health and Safety Representative, and Mr. Tom Breda, Manufacturing Engineer.

In filing this claim, the claimant alleges that his severe hearing loss problems have resulted from "exposure to extremely loud noises while working at General Motors." During his entire period of employment, from July 31, 1970 until the present time, Mr. Metzler has been employed in the skilled trade classification of machine repairman. Normally, an individual working as a machine repairman would report to the machine repair shop where he could receive job assignments for repair work in any part of the plant, including regulated areas where very noisy stamping operations are performed. It should be noted that personal hearing protection is provided and required to be used in these regulated areas where excessive noise exposures can occur.

Although typically a machine repairman would be expected to work anywhere in this large plant, it is important to note that this claimant, because of ear problems experienced prior to his employment at G.M., requested work in quieter areas of the plant. In his job application for work at this plant, dated February 24, 1970, Mr. Metzler describes a hearing loss in his right ear and also lists "labyrinthitis" as a medical condition. Labyrinthitis

is described in Dorland's Medical Dictionary (twenty-sixth edition) as an inflammation of the inner ear marked by abnormalities of hearing, hearing loss, tinnitus and vertigo.

Shortly after his employment at G.M., because of his previous hearing problems and his difficulty in communicating in the noisier areas, Mr. Metzler was given as many assignments as possible in the tool room area (Bays 1 & 2) of the plant. Company noise studies in this area, where tool and die work are performed, indicate that time weighted average (TWA) noise exposures average 80 to 81 dBA, well below OSHA's "action level" of 85 dBA and permissible exposure limit (PEL) of 90 dBA. Employment records for Mr. Metzler indicate that for fourteen of his nearly twenty years of employment, including the last eight, he worked totally in the tool room, while for the remaining years he worked both in the shop and tool room, with, by far, most of his time spent in the quieter tool room during these periods.

Walking through the tool room on February 20, 1990, noise levels did not appear to be excessive, nor was there any problem in carrying on a normal conversation without shouting. Normally when background noise levels range between 80 and 85 dBA, one must raise his voice considerably to be heard, while when background noise exceeds 85 dBA, it is often necessary to shout in order to communicate. Noise from the manufacturing areas, separated from the tool room by several hundred feet of leaded vinyl acoustical curtains, can be heard but does not appear to be excessive.

While the possible aggravation or worsening of this individual's hearing problems during this period of employment must remain a medical opinion, it would appear that the company has been more than responsible in assigning Mr. Metzler to work primarily in the tool room which is one of the quietest unregulated areas of the plant, and utilizing his services in the regulated production areas only when an urgent need arose. When on occasion he was given an assignment in the regulated production areas, the claimant apparently made use of effective hearing protection which is required in these areas. Mr. Breda, a former supervisor of the claimant, stated that he has observed Mr. Metzler wearing earmuff type hearing protection while working in regulated areas.

In addition to OSHA's adoption of an "action level" of 85 dBA (TWA), the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH) has determined that 8-hour exposures to noise levels which exceed 85 dBA can cause hearing losses in excess of those due to the customary effects of advancing age. In adopting this value, the ACGIH explains that this exposure limit is set at a level under which it is believed that nearly all workers may be

repeatedly exposed without adverse effect on their ability to hear and understand normal speech, adding, however, that this value should only be used as a guide in the control of noise, and due to individual susceptibility, should not be used as a fine line between safe and dangerous levels.

Sincerely,

*Donald B. Meeker*

Donald B. Meeker  
Industrial Hygienist

DBM/jg

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# RECORDS CERTIFICATION

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SUPERVISOR, Microfilming Unit

Bernie Hurrell  
Name (Camera Operator)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Date Mar. 8, 1961