

EVERETT LOMAX	)	
	)	
Claimant	)	
	)	
v.	)	
	)	
ALABAMA DRY DOCK AND	)	
SHIPBUILDING CORPORATION	)	DATE ISSUED:
	)	
Self-Insured	)	
Employer-Petitioner	)	
	)	
and	)	
	)	
TRAVELERS INSURANCE	)	
COMPANY	)	
	)	
Carrier-Respondent	)	DECISION and ORDER

Appeal of the Order Dismissing Travelers Insurance Company of Richard D. Mills,  
Administrative Law Judge, United States Department of Labor.

Walter R. Meigs, Mobile, Alabama, for employer.

Traci M. Castille (Franke, Rainey & Salloum), Gulfport, Mississippi, for carrier.

Before: HALL, Chief Administrative Appeals Judge, SMITH and DOLDER,  
Administrative Appeals Judges.

PER CURIAM:

Employer appeals the Order Dismissing Travelers Insurance Company (89-LHC-3345) of Administrative Law Judge Richard D. Mills rendered on a claim filed pursuant to the provisions of the Longshore and Harbor Workers' Compensation Act, as amended, 33 U.S.C. §901 *et seq.* (the Act). We must affirm the findings of fact and conclusions of law of the administrative law judge which are rational, supported by substantial evidence, and in accordance with law. *O'Keeffe v. Smith, Hinchman & Grylls Associates, Inc.*, 380 U.S. 359 (1965); 33 U.S.C. §921(b)(3).

Claimant worked for employer from 1943 until his retirement on September 8, 1988 as a shipbuilder/repairer, during which time he was exposed to loud noise. On October 22, 1987,

claimant filed a claim under the Act for a 6 percent monaural hearing loss, based on the results of a July 11, 1987, audiogram. Claimant's attorney received a copy of this audiogram and attached a copy of it to the claim. Thereafter, claimant underwent an additional audiometric evaluation on December 13, 1989, which revealed a monaural impairment of 5.6 percent.

On July 31, 1991, the parties submitted a proposed settlement agreement pursuant to Section 8(i), 33 U.S.C. §908(i), to the administrative law judge in which employer agreed to pay claimant a lump sum of \$1,135.92, plus \$1,700 for his attorney's fee and future medical benefits. The proposed settlement was approved by the administrative law judge in a Decision and Order Approving Settlement dated August 12, 1991. The remaining issue to be decided by the administrative law judge was whether Travelers Insurance Company (Travelers), which provided insurance coverage to employer from May 24, 1988, to May 24, 1989, was liable as the responsible carrier.

In his Order Dismissing Travelers Insurance Company, the administrative law judge determined that employer was liable for claimant's benefits in its self-insured capacity, thereby rejecting employer's argument that pursuant to Section 8(c)(13)(D) of the Act, 33 U.S.C. §908(c)(13)(D)(1988), claimant could not be charged with awareness of his occupational hearing loss until sometime in 1991 when he personally received a copy of the July 11, 1987, audiogram and accompanying report. Inasmuch as both the filing audiogram and the October 22, 1987, claim predated May 24, 1988, when Travelers assumed the risk, the administrative law judge concluded that employer was liable for claimant's occupational hearing loss in its self-insured capacity.

Employer appeals the administrative law judge's finding that it is liable for the claim in its capacity as a self-insurer. Specifically, employer argues that Travelers had assumed the risk at the time claimant received a copy of his 1987 audiogram and report, that language contained in the insurance policy makes Travelers liable, and that claimant continued to be exposed to injurious stimuli subsequent to Travelers assuming the risk.<sup>1</sup> Travelers responds, urging affirmance of the administrative law judge's finding that employer is liable for claimant's benefits.

Employer's arguments that the determination of the responsible employer is contingent upon claimant's receipt of the audiogram and accompanying report, that Travelers is liable pursuant to the terms of its insurance policy with employer, and that Travelers waived its rights to contest liability by virtue of its January 19, 1989, letter to employer have previously been considered by the Board and are rejected for the reasons stated in *Barnes v. Alabama Dry Dock & Shipbuilding Corp.*, 27 BRBS 188 (1993); *see also Good v. Ingalls Shipbuilding, Inc.*, 26 BRBS 159 (1992). In *Good*, the Board adopted the decision of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in *Port of Portland v. Director, OWCP*, 932 F.2d 836, 24 BRBS 137 (CRT)(9th Cir. 1992), that receipt of an audiogram and accompanying report has no significance outside the procedural requirements of Sections 12 and 13 of the Act, 33 U.S.C. §§912, 913, and that the responsible employer or carrier is

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<sup>1</sup>The Board hereby rejects employer's motion that it certify questions of Alabama State law to the Supreme Court of Alabama for the reasons stated in *Barnes v. Alabama Dry Dock & Shipbuilding Corp.*, 27 BRBS 188 (1993).

the one on the risk at the most recent exposure related to the disability evidenced on the audiogram determinative of the disability for which claimant is being compensated. *See Good*, 26 BRBS at 163. *See also Travelers Insurance Co. v. Cardillo*, 225 F.2d 137 (2d Cir.), *cert. denied*, 350 U.S. 913 (1955).

We note, however, that in the instant case, the administrative law judge made no finding as to which of the two audiograms of record was determinative of claimant's disability.<sup>2</sup> *See CX 5; RX 17*. Thus, since the party liable for claimant's hearing loss benefits is the one on the risk at the time of claimant's most recent exposure to injurious stimuli prior to the determinative audiogram, and the administrative law judge failed to make a finding as to which audiogram is determinative, we vacate the administrative law judge's order dismissing Travelers and remand the case to the administrative law judge to make such a finding and determine the liable party consistent with *Good* and *Port of Portland*.

Accordingly, the administrative law judge's Order Dismissing Travelers Insurance Company is vacated and the case is remanded to the administrative law judge for further findings consistent with this opinion.

SO ORDERED.

BETTY JEAN HALL, Chief  
Administrative Appeals Judge

ROY P. SMITH  
Administrative Appeals Judge

NANCY S. DOLDER  
Administrative Appeals Judge

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<sup>2</sup>If the administrative law judge bases his findings on an average of the audiometric results, then the party at risk at the time of the last audiogram relied upon could be held liable.