

VA DISABILITY CLAIM TRACKING SHEET

Tinnitus

38 CFR §4.87 | Diagnostic Code 6260

Part A — Veteran Information

Name:

VA file number:

Affected ear(s) (circle): RIGHT / LEFT / BOTH / IN THE HEAD

Date tracking started:

Part B — What the VA Uses to Rate This Condition

Tinnitus is rated under 38 CFR §4.87, Diagnostic Code 6260. There is only one rating level — 10% — regardless of whether tinnitus is mild or severe, in one ear, both ears, or perceived in the head. The bilateral factor does not apply. There is no higher schedular rating for tinnitus alone.

10% Only rating Recurrent tinnitus — ringing, buzzing, roaring, hissing, or clicking. Same rating whether unilateral, bilateral, or perceived in the head. Maximum and only available rating.

 *Proposed Rule Change: In 2022 VA proposed eliminating DC 6260 and rating tinnitus only as a symptom of an underlying condition. This has NOT been finalized as of 2026. If you have not yet filed for tinnitus, filing now under current rules locks in the 10% rating under existing criteria. Veterans already rated are protected and cannot be reduced unless fraud or clear and unmistakable error is shown.*

Strategic Value: Tinnitus may seem like a small rating but it serves two important purposes — it adds 10% to your combined rating which can push you over a meaningful threshold, and it establishes a documented record of in-service noise exposure that supports future claims for hearing loss, anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders.

Part C — Service Connection

Check what applies to your claim:

- ☐ Direct service connection — noise exposure from military MOS, weapons, aircraft, vehicles, or other in-service sources
- ☐ Veteran's lay statement is accepted as sufficient to diagnose tinnitus — no audiometric test is required to establish the diagnosis

Common in-service noise sources — check all that apply:

- ☐ Weapons fire — rifles, artillery, mortars, machine guns
- ☐ Aircraft noise — engines, rotors, flight deck operations
- ☐ Vehicle noise — tanks, APCs, trucks, motorized equipment
- ☐ Explosive blasts or IED exposure
- ☐ Power tools, generators, or heavy machinery
- ☐ Ship engine rooms or mechanical compartments
- ☐ Combat noise exposure in general

In-Service Noise Exposure Description

Describe your specific in-service noise exposure:

- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
-

MOS / rate / specialty:

Unit and deployment:

When tinnitus first started:

Part D — Current Symptoms

- ☐ Ringing in the ears
- ☐ Buzzing
- ☐ Roaring
- ☐ Hissing
- ☐ Clicking
- ☐ Constant tinnitus
- ☐ Intermittent / recurrent tinnitus
- ☐ Affects sleep
- ☐ Affects concentration
- ☐ Causes anxiety or depression

Describe your tinnitus on your worst days:

- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
-

Part E — Evidence Checklist

- ☐ Veteran's lay statement describing tinnitus symptoms and onset
- ☐ Service records showing noise-exposed MOS, deployments, or specific incidents
- ☐ DD-214 / separation documents
- ☐ Audiological evaluation (not required for tinnitus diagnosis but supports the claim)
- ☐ Nexus letter from audiologist or physician (helpful but not always required)
- ☐ Buddy statements from service members who witnessed noise exposure

Part F — C&P Exam Preparation

Exam date and time:

Exam location:

Day-of Reminders:

- ☐ I will describe my tinnitus accurately — frequency, pitch, whether constant or intermittent
- ☐ I will mention how it affects my sleep and concentration
- ☐ I will describe specific in-service noise exposures that caused it
- ☐ I understand the rating is 10% regardless of severity — honesty is all that is needed

Part G — Claim Status

Date claim filed:

Claim number:

Not started → Evidence complete → C&P scheduled → Filed → Decision received

Rating assigned (expected 10%):

Effective date:

Part H — Secondary Conditions Linked to Tinnitus / Noise Exposure

Check any secondary conditions to consider claiming alongside or after tinnitus:

- ☐ Hearing loss (DC 6100) — separate claim, rated separately, commonly co-claimed with tinnitus
- ☐ Anxiety or depression secondary to chronic tinnitus (DC 9400 / 9434)
- ☐ Sleep impairment secondary to tinnitus
- ☐ Migraines secondary to tinnitus or noise exposure

Criteria from 38 CFR §4.87, DC 6260. Always verify current criteria at ecfr.gov before filing. Not legal or medical advice. — The Complete VA Disability Claim Playbook · completevaplaybook.com