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Environmental Health Services

Noise Information

What is Noise?

Noise is defined as unwanted sound. It can originate from a number of sources.

Major Sources of Noise

- Radios, stereos, household parties
- Construction noise
- Home workshops and power tools
- Musical instruments
- Commercial and industrial activities
- Agricultural activities

How Can Noise Affect My Health?

Noise is subjective. Impacts can vary from person to person. For some people, noise can disrupt their lives by causing loss of sleep, interference to activities and emotional stress. These impacts can also lead to other health effects. Noise at high levels can affect hearing.

Noise and the Law

The *Environmental Protection Act 1986* (the Act) and its Regulations contain provisions on noise. In accordance with the legislation it is an offence to create unreasonable noise. Noise is deemed "unreasonable" if it is found to breach specified sound levels, and if it interferes with health, welfare, convenience, comfort or amenity. Sound levels are specified in the legislation and can be measured. These maximum levels for noise vary depending on the time of day, type of premises and activities.

The time of day when a noise occurs influences its intrusiveness and annoyance. For example, making a loud noise late at night or very early in the morning may be likely to annoy your neighbours more than making the noise during the day.

How Can I Resolve Neighbourhood Noise Problems?

If you consider you are unreasonably impacted by noise there are a number of approaches you can take. In the first instance, it is advised to calmly discuss the matter with the person causing the noise. In most cases an agreement can be amicably reached between all parties.

It is important not to wait until your tolerance threshold is exhausted. Be proactive and address the issue as soon as practical.

Often persons will not have realised they are causing a problem and in many cases will be only too happy to do what they can to help.

If this approach is not possible or is not successful, depending on the type of noise you may consider contacting the Police or the Shire and lodging a formal complaint in writing.

How to be a Courteous Neighbour

Noise levels and the impact of noise from your activities can vary depending on the location of your house and surrounding houses. Noise control in densely populated areas is of particular importance. The following measures can be undertaken to reduce the impact of noise on neighbours and the community.

Parties & Social Gatherings

Give prior notice to your neighbours about parties and large social gatherings. This gives your neighbours time to accommodate both their and your needs. Face speakers into the centre of the house if inside, and towards your house rather than your neighbours if outside. Turn down the bass level on stereos. Close windows and doors if inside. Start your party earlier so that it can finish earlier, and set the volume control so as to ensure music is not audible outside of your property boundary after 10 pm on weeknights, or midnight on a Friday or Saturday night.

Noise from parties will usually exceed the requirements in the legislation. However most neighbours will tolerate one-off parties if they have been told in advance. Parties occurring on a regular basis cause complaints. Authorised Officers have the power to turn off music and confiscate equipment.

Power Tools

Operate power tools between the hours of:

- **7 am to 7 pm Monday to Saturday**
It is recommended to start after 8 am on Saturdays.
- **9 am to 7 pm Sundays and Public Holidays**

Power tools include equipment such as lawn mowers and edgers. Power tools should not be operated for more than 2 hours on any given day, and only as often as is reasonable. It is recommended that tools are used at times and places that will minimise annoyance to your neighbours.

Musical Instruments

Musical instruments should not be played in practice for more than one hour (cumulative time) on any given day, unless full compliance with noise levels specified in the legislation can be met. Attempt to minimise the impact on neighbours by keeping windows and doors closed.

Vehicles

Ensure your car, truck or motorcycle has an effective muffler fitted, and refrain from allowing vehicles/equipment to idle unnecessarily. Please note that there are certain exemptions in the legislation for vehicles.

Pool Pumps

Pool pumps are a major source of noise complaints, due to the tone and modulation in the sound emitted which can cause annoyance.

Avoid operating pool pumps between the hours of 7 pm and 7 am. Ensure pumps are located as far away from your boundaries as possible to minimise noise levels to neighbours.

Air-Conditioners

Air-conditioners are also a major source of noise complaints. Air-Conditioners must meet the specified sound levels in the legislation. Prior to installation, it is important to consider the location for the outside component of evaporative and refrigerative area conditioners, as it is expensive to have to relocate them at a later date due to a noise dispute. Installers should be able to assist and sound levels (in decibels) are included on products to help guide choices. Further information can be found in the 'Air Conditioning Residential Best Practice Guideline - Western Australia' produced by AIRAH.

Building Site Noise

Building and construction noise should not be conducted outside the hours of 7 am to 7 pm Monday to Saturday. **Construction noise is not permitted on Sundays and public holidays**, unless prior approval has been obtained from the Shire in accordance with legislation. A Noise Management Plan will be required to be submitted as part of this process. Construction does not include minor maintenance undertaken by the property owner.

Equipment used on building sites which are close to other residences should always be maintained in good order. The equipment is to be fitted with good quality exhaust mufflers where appropriate so that noise emissions are minimised.

Equipment should be positioned so that the exhaust outlet does not face directly into neighbouring properties. Make sure that radios are not audible at nearby residential premises.

Making a Noise Complaint

The Shire's Health Services may be able to assist with resolving a noise issue. Complaints are to be lodged in writing via a 'Noise Complaint Form'.

Please note that anonymous complaints will not be investigated by the Shire. Written complaints are required.

On receipt of a complaint an Authorised Officer will consider and assess the circumstances. This may include investigation which can take time. In some cases sound level monitoring and/or recording will need to be undertaken to verify sound levels in accordance with the legislation. This can take a considerable length of time due to recording and data analysing processes.

Often issues are resolved when the offender of the alleged excessive noise is advised of the complaint and of their obligations in relation to noise.

The Shire's Health Services are not available for after-hours call out. Any noise concern which you believe requires an immediate response (such as party noise) should be notified to the Police.

Unamplified human voice, such as yelling or screaming and other anti-social behaviour, is considered a public nuisance rather than a noise issue. Due to safety concerns, Shire staff are not trained or equipped to deal with issues arising from parties and are unable to assist.

Any complaint found to be a frivolous, vexatious or of an unreasonable nature will not be dealt with by the Shire.

Penalties

Failure to observe the directions of an Authorised Officer may result in enforcement action being taken. This may include an Infringement Notice, Noise Abatement Notice, confiscation of equipment or prosecution.

Further Information

Please contact the Shire's Health Services on phone 9780 4200 or email shire@donnybrook.wa.gov.au