

NOISE

Introduction:

When unwanted sounds intrude into our environment, "noise" exists. Most Americans accept some level of noise as a tolerable nuisance--part of our modern, technological way of life. Noise, however, can be more than a nuisance; it can, according to studies conducted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), degrade the livability of a community and damage the physical and mental health of a person.

Noise as a Physical Phenomenon:

The loudness, or magnitude of sound, is commonly measured in decibels (dB). For human beings, the audible spectrum ranges from 0 to 140 dB. An illustration of this scale is provided in Table 1.

Table 1
Loudness Range of Common Sounds¹
(Measured at Source or Indicated Distance)

Sound Source	dB	Typical Response
	150	
Sonic Boom	140	Painfully Loud
	130	
Jet Takeoff (200 ft.)	120	Limits of Amplified Speech
Auto Horn (3 ft.)	110	Maximum Vocal Effort
Shout (0.5 ft.)	100	Very Annoying
Heavy Truck (50 Ft.)	90	Annoying
Pneumatic Drill (50 ft.)	80	Telephone Use Difficult
Freeway Traffic (50 ft.)	70	
Air Conditioning		
Unit (20 ft.)	60	
Living Room	50	Quiet
Library	40	
Soft Whisper	30	Very Quiet
	20	
Leaves Rustling	10	Just Audible
	5	Threshold of Hearing

¹ Council on Environmental Quality, The First Annual Report, Washington D.C., 1970.

Other noise sources include industrial and construction activities and normal human activity. The time and duration of these noise generators are variable depending on the type of activity.

In City Noise:

The Newport area contains relatively few chronic noise problems. Traffic related noises account for a majority of the sources within the city, most of which occurs in commercial areas, thus minimizing the conflicts with sensitive areas such as schools or residential areas.

Airports, also, can be serious sources of noise; this is particularly true where an airport serves jet aircraft. The Newport Municipal Airport is principally a general aviation facility, although jet planes occasionally use it. However, there does exist a potential for more jet traffic, according to the Airport Master Plan ². Too, the U.S. Coast Guard has plans to build a helicopter base on airport property. Newport's Airport Master Plan contains a detailed analysis of noise and its affects on the surrounding area. Year 2008 noise contours have been determined, and it appears that the 55 Ldn (day-night average sound level) falls within an area that is not noise sensitive.

Noise Restriction: ³

In exercising its general powers to protect the health, safety, and welfare of its citizens, the City may address noise problems in a variety of ways, including under the general power of the City to regulate nuisances and through the land use approval process. The City currently has an ordinance to regulate noise nuisances under the general power of the City to regulate for nuisances. This ordinance may be amended by the City Council as needed. The City also currently addresses noise nuisance issues in the land use process. For example, the Newport Zoning Ordinance conditional use permit approval criteria and the extension, expansion, or enlargement of nonconforming uses criteria both consider the impact of nuisances such as noise that may be generated by the proposed conditional use or the nonconforming use.

Conclusions:

Newport has relatively few noise pollution problems. The few acute problems that do arise can be handled as nuisances and dealt with on a complaint basis. If warranted, the police may use the DEQ to determine if a state or federal law has been violated. If it has, it is the responsibility of the DEQ to enforce.

² FORESITE Group, Airport Master Plan, 1991.

³ Section amended by Ordinance No. 1883 (March 21, 2005).

GOALS/POLICIES
NOISE QUALITY

Goal: To cooperate with the state and federal agencies responsible for noise regulation.

Policy 1: The City of Newport recognizes that noise can cause problems, thereby affecting the livability of the city. The city will cooperate and comply with state and federal agencies responsible for the enforcement of state and national regulations regarding noise.

Policy 2: The City may consider noise issues as appropriate in the land use process by including noise nuisance issues within land use approval criteria. 4

4 Policy 2 Amended by Ordinance No, 1883 (March 21, 2005) .