

Construction noise

Updated February 2011

EPA 425/11: This information sheet offers advice on dealing with excessive noise from building sites.

Introduction

Some activities on construction sites are noisy. Although some noise may be unavoidable, it can often be controlled using improved work practices. The responsible person, being the owner, occupier or contractor must take all reasonable and practicable measures to minimise noise resulting from the activity and to reduce its impact.

Recommended hours of operation

Construction noise resulting in noise with an adverse impact on amenity is subject to the following restrictions:

- must not occur on a Sunday or other public holiday, and
- must not occur on any other day except between 7 am and 7 pm.

However, a particular operation may occur on a Sunday or Public Holiday between 9 am and 7 pm or may commence before 7 am on any other day to:

- avoid an unreasonable interruption of vehicle or pedestrian traffic movement, or
- if other grounds exist that the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) or administering agency determines to be sufficient.

The *Environment Protection Act 1993* (EP Act) requires that all reasonable and practicable measures are taken by building companies and contractors to minimise noise if the noise will create an adverse impact on the amenity.

Construction activity results in noise with an adverse impact on amenity if the measurements taken in relation to the noise source and the noise affected premises show:

- that the source noise level (continuous) exceeds 45 dB(A); or
- that the source noise level (maximum) exceeds 60 dB(A). See Part 3 of the *Environment Protection (Noise) Policy 2007* (Noise Policy) for the measurement procedure.

What can be done about construction noise?

Try contacting the responsible person in a friendly way. They may not realise the effect the noise is having on nearby residents. Subject to the noise type, often the builder or site workers can immediately reduce the noise. That is, by speaking more quietly, turning down radios, using quieter equipment or by moving machinery away from the affected house. It is also possible to negotiate an agreement about the times they will undertake particularly noisy activities.

Construction of residential premises

Before approaching site workers or the builder, think about balancing the needs of the owner and the builder. If noisy work is occurring after hours and site workers are not willing to compromise, and you cannot wait to contact the building company during normal office hours, then contact the police on 131 444 while the noise is occurring. The police can make an assessment and if appropriate, take action under the EP Act.

Construction of industrial/commercial premises

If the noise is coming from the construction of industrial or commercial premises, then contact the Customer Services Officer, Environment Protection Authority (EPA), by telephone—(08) 8204 2004—during normal working hours.

What can the responsible person do about construction noise?

The responsible person should notify neighbours well before the construction is due to commence and advise neighbours about the start date, duration, the kind of construction and provide a contact telephone number for any complaints.

All reasonable and practicable measures must be taken to minimise noise resulting from the activity and to minimise its impact such as:

- radios that can be heard off site should not be used before 7 am, and be no louder than necessary
- commencing any particularly noisy part of the activity after 9 am, such as use of masonry saws or jackhammers
- builders should take care when dropping materials from a height, for example, into or out of a truck, or when loading or unloading scaffolding
- locating noisy equipment (such as cement mixers and masonry saws) so that their impact on neighbouring premises is minimised (whether by maximising the distance to the neighbouring premises, using structures or elevations to create sound barriers)
- shutting or throttling down equipment (such as backhoes, cranes, bobcats, loaders and generators) whenever they are not in actual use
- ensuring that noise reduction devices such as mufflers are fitted and operating effectively
- adopting off-site or other alternative processes that eliminate or lessen resulting noise
- ensuring that equipment is not operated if maintenance or repairs would eliminate or significantly reduce noise.

Under some circumstances, such as on days of high forecast temperature, concrete pouring may commence before 7 am. In these instances, builders need to ensure all reasonable and practicable measures are taken to minimise noise (as above) and includes:

- complete all shuttering and other site preparations before 7 pm the previous day unless it can be done in a way that does not create off-site noise.

Further information

Legislation

Legislation may be viewed on the Internet at: <www.legislation.sa.gov.au>

Copies of legislation are available for purchase from:

Service SA Government Legislation Outlet
Adelaide Service SA Centre
108 North Terrace
Adelaide SA 5000

Telephone: 13 23 24
Facsimile: (08) 8204 1909
Website: <shop.service.sa.gov.au>

For general information please contact:

Environment Protection Authority
GPO Box 2607
Adelaide SA 5001

Telephone: (08) 8204 2004
Facsimile: (08) 8124 4670
Freecall (country): 1800 623 445
Website: <www.epa.sa.gov.au>
Email: <epainfo@epa.sa.gov.au>
