

Document No: HS-0020

One of the many services provided by the City of Karratha's Environmental Health Services is provision of advice and guidance on issues of noise matters in the community. The Environmental Health Service does so in accordance with the requirements of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* and *Environmental Protection (Noise) Regulations 1997*.

Stereo noise, air conditioners, noisy parties are examples of noises that can sometimes become annoying in residential areas. Some general information to remember when considering these types of noise:

1. Talk to your neighbour creating the noise. They may be unaware that it is causing a nuisance to neighbours. Say a friendly hello and ask if they can reduce the noise.
2. Allowable noise levels are set by the Regulations for different times of the day and of the week. The loudest allowable noise levels are during the daytime between 7am and 7pm Monday to Saturday for residential areas. From 7pm to 10pm the levels reduce, and from 10pm to 7am they are their lowest.
3. If you can hear the noise from your property boundary it's probably too loud and does not comply with the Regulations.
4. If you plan on having a party, let your neighbours know in advance and switch the music down at 10pm and off at 12am.

Music

Music must comply with the assigned noise levels stated in the *Environmental Protection (Noise) Regulations 1997*. As a guide, music that is clearly audible at the boundary of a property may cause a disturbance and exceed allowable noise levels. Music with a dominant bass component can be disturbing even when it doesn't appear to be loud. The bass component should therefore be kept to a minimum.

Specified Equipment and Musical Instruments

Specified equipment is any equipment requiring the constant presence of an operator for normal use. This includes many common household items such as lawnmowers, electric drills, basketballs, dirt bikes and musical instruments. The use of power tools is inherently noisy but is allowed provided the equipment is in good working order and compatible with the work being undertaken. If using a static unit such as a brick saw or compressor it is advisable to position it away from your neighbours' living and sleeping areas. It is understood that noise from specified equipment generally exceeds the assigned noise levels set in the regulations therefore those assigned noise levels do not apply provided:

- 1) The equipment is used –
 - **between 7am and 7pm Monday to Saturday; or**
 - **between 9am and 7pm on a Sunday or Public Holidays.**

Noise emitted from specified equipment outside of these hours must meet the assigned levels. As a general rule, to judge whether a noise emission exceeds the assigned levels if you can hear the noise past your property boundary it exceeds the assigned levels.

- 2) The equipment must **not** be used for more than –
 - **two hours per day; or**
 - **one hour per day if it is a musical instrument**

3) The specified equipment must be used in a reasonable manner and the noise emitted must not unreasonably interfere with the health, welfare, convenience, comfort or amenity of an occupier of premises receiving the noise. Whether or not the noise emission unreasonably interferes is up to the discretion of the Environmental Health Officer.

Party Noise

Many of us enjoy entertaining outside and it is advisable that you try these recommendations to avoid a strained relationship with your neighbours and comply with the regulations.

- Start your party earlier so it can finish earlier.
- Avoid using speakers outside the house.
- Let your neighbours know about the party and the time you expect to finish.
- Adjust the music volume (especially the bass) to ensure it does not cause a nuisance to your neighbours.
- If the party finishes late move your guests inside and close all windows and doors.

Note: if a party is occurring late at night and it is causing a disturbance with loud music and or offensive language it is best to notify the police.

Construction Noise

Work that creates noise on a construction site may be carried out between **7am and 7pm on Monday to Saturday (excluding Sundays and public holidays)** provided:

- The equipment is the quietest available, and
- Work is undertaken in accordance with noise practices set out in sec.6 of AS 2436- 1981.

Builders carrying out work on a Sunday or public holiday will need to have an approved noise management plan which would include how they propose to do the work and respond to complaints if they arise.

Intruder Alarms

As the local community has become increasingly concerned with security, there has been a rapid rise in the number of intruder alarms installed. Each year numerous complaints about audible alarms are received with majority of cases been falsely activated alarms because they are incorrectly installed or mistakenly triggered. These alarms cause significant annoyance to the neighbouring community due to the high noise levels emitted. To reduce the disturbance to the neighbourhood from you security system you can:

- ensure you are familiar with your alarm system and can operate it correctly;
- keep your alarm system in good working order, serviced yearly;
- choose a silent or monitored alarm instead of an audible system;
- minimise the risk of alarm being triggered from external factors by:
 - closing windows and doors.
 - keeping pets outside.
 - removing trees and shrubs away from windows/doors.
 - eliminate vermin and insects.

The Environmental Protection Act 1986 gives police the power to silence audible alarms by taking whatever steps necessary ie if the alarm has been sounding for 30 minutes or more. In these situations, an alarm technician is called out to disconnect the alarm. The Department of Environmental and Conservation may initiate legal action to recover costs. If the alarm continues to sound regularly for short periods of time, the City can be contacted to follow the issue through with the owner and ensure the problem is rectified.

Penalties

Where an Environmental Health Officer determines that unreasonable noise is or has been emitted from a premises the following enforcement action can be taken:

1. Service of a \$250 or \$500 infringement notice (on the spot fine)
2. Service of a Noise Abatement Directive (can't emit noise for 7 days, \$25,000 penalty for breach)
3. Seizure of the equipment for up to 7 days
4. Service of an Environmental Protection Notice – registered on land title, with maximum penalty of \$250,000 and a daily penalty of \$50,000 for breach.

If you need more information about any matter raised in this document, please contact the City of Karratha's Environmental Health Service on 9186 8555.