

Building Noise

SAFEGUARDING TOWNSVILLE'S ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Many activities on building and construction (or demolishing) sites produce significant levels of noise and result in becoming an environmental nuisance. Although some noise is unavoidable, it can be controlled fairly simply or limited to more convenient times through the day.

WHEN DOES BUILDING WORK BECOME AN ENVIRONMENTAL NUISANCE?

Building noise is considered an environmental nuisance when it results in unreasonable interference with an environmental value, i.e. affect the health, welfare, convenience or comfort of any person on or off the site.

This activity includes a person carrying out building work under an owner-builder permit but excludes a person carrying out building work at premises used by the person only for residential purposes.

WHAT EFFECT DOES NOISE HAVE?

Everyone reacts differently to noise (defined as unwanted sound). What can be unbearable for one person may pass almost unnoticed by another. How annoyed we become depends on the loudness, time, place and frequency of the noise.

Noise can negatively affect our health and well-being. As well as more obvious things like hearing loss; excessive or continuous noise may cause anxiety, stress, high blood pressure, sleep deprivation, distraction, lost productivity, and a general reduction in the quality of life.

WHY DOES COUNCIL REGULATE NOISE?

Noise coming from building sites may be against the law (unless it is within specific levels and time limits) and council will respond to complaints from affected residents. Council has the power to order building work to cease if necessary.

Building work restrictions are in place to help strike a balance between the builder's need to start work early in the morning and the need to protect the lifestyle of neighbours. These restrictions govern any work being carried out by owner/builders, builders, sub-contractors, or other professions engaged to work on behalf or for a builder.



HOW IS NOISE REGULATED?

Council determines if noise is causing an environmental nuisance based on:

- The time the noise is made,
- How long noise lasts,
- The noise environment of the surrounding area,
- The impact of noise on the environment,
- The views of the complainants (refer "audible noise")

Enforcement of noise regulation is generally based upon complaints from members of the public, so smart operators will work actively to get on with their neighbours, reduce noise levels, and schedule especially noisy activities in consultation with neighbours first to discuss possible concerns and ask for suggestions about solving any problems.

In many cases an agreement can be reached that satisfies the needs of everyone. If compromises are agreed upon, they should be managed with care and sensitivity if they are to work effectively. Both parties should be aware of each other's needs and of the options which are being avoided or removed.

WHEN CAN BUILDING NOISE BE MADE?

Environmental Protection Act 1994 prohibits building noise (audible noise) within the following times:



- Monday to Saturday from 6:30pm to 6:30am,
- Sundays or public holidays.

Audible noise is any noise which may be heard on the property boundary – including tools, trucks, machinery or any other source of noise.

HOW CAN BUILDERS REDUCE NOISE LEVELS?

The following methods can help prevent an environmental nuisance:

- Start building work only after 6:30am Monday to Saturday. Exceptions should be discussed first with neighbours and then with Council's Environmental Health officers if required.
- Power tools create considerable noise which can be difficult to control. Consider using noisy tools at times and places that will minimise nuisance to neighbours.
- Building site equipment should be well maintained and fitted with good quality mufflers to reduce noise emissions. Place noisy plant equipment like cement mixers at maximum distance from neighbours.
- Take care loading, unloading and moving materials to minimise noise.

DO IT YOURSELF BUILDING PROJECTS

(Also refer s.440S of the EP Act 2004 – Regulated Devices)

Residents considering a building project likely to create noise should talk to their neighbours.

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT UNREASONABLE CONSTRUCTION NOISE?

A good place to start is to let the builders know that their noise is a problem for you.

They may not realise the effect the noise is having. Talk about the specific elements of their noise which concern you and try to reach an agreement with them about the noise.

Often a builder can reduce the noise by using quieter equipment or by moving machinery away from your house. If all else fails, contact Council to seek further advice.

WHAT CAN COUNCIL DO?

If Council receives a complaint, an Environmental Health Officer will investigate unless the noise restrictions are on the Development Approval, in which case, a Planning Officer will investigate. If a breach of the law is found, they may:

- Issue a warning notice with information about the laws and how the builder can comply with them,
- Issue on-the-spot fine (usually after a warning notice has been issued).

Council may also prosecute for continuing offences, failure to pay fines or failure to comply with notices.

MORE INFORMATION & CONTACTING COUNCIL

If you require any further information about this or any other Environmental Nuisance issue, please call Council's Customer Service Centre on 1300 878 001.

Alternatively a range of Fact Sheets along with information regarding other Environmental Nuisance issues can be accessed by visiting the Townsville City Council website www.townsville.qld.gov.au and following the links to Environmental Nuisances.

