

Noise pollution prevention and control tips

Below are a few things people and governments can do to make our communities and living places quieter:

Construction of soundproof rooms for noisy machines in industrial and manufacturing installations must be encouraged. This is also important for residential building—noisy machines should be installed far from sleeping and living rooms, like in a basement or garage.

Use of horns with jarring sounds, motorbikes with damaged exhaust pipes, noisy trucks to be banned.

Noise producing industries, airports, bus and transport terminals and railway stations to be sighted far from where living places.

Community law enforcers should check the misuse of loudspeakers, worshipers, outdoor parties and discos, as well as public announcements systems.

Community laws must silence zones near schools / colleges, hospitals etc.

Vegetation (trees) along roads and in residential areas is a good way to reduce noise pollution as they absorb sound.

Ways to Reduce Noise Pollution

Man has a poor track record of recognizing disease-causing agents. And often, once the agents have been recognized, people are still reluctant to change. Tobacco is an obvious example of this, but there are many more including: lead, asbestos, mercury, certain pesticides, and some foods such as trans fats.

One commonly overlooked disease causer is noise pollution. Right now, the World Health Organization found that traffic noise alone is harmful to the health of almost every third person

in Europe. One in five, they found, were exposed to nighttime sound levels that could significantly damage health. The numbers are similar elsewhere.

As our population continues to grow, the sources of noise will continue to become more numerous (and obnoxious). Unfortunately, in the United States we've made negative progress in the way of legislation. The 1972 Noise Control Act—which was created to protect Americans from noise that poses a threat health and welfare—was terminated in 1982 due to a lack of federal funding.

As individuals, we are incapable of completely changing our environment to eliminate excess noises—such things will need to be left up to government, city planners, etc.—however, there are still things we can do while we wait:

1. Turn off your electronics. Computers, game systems, televisions and the like all make noise when they're not in use—whether it's a fan spinning or that high-pitched, barely-audible screech some TVs make in standby. Over time, all of these sounds cause stress on the ears. Turn them off when you are not using them. A little extra effort is worth it; as a bonus, you'll save some money on electricity.

2. Sound proof your space. There are a lot of things you can do to reduce the sound at home (or perhaps your workplace).

- If you have hard floors, rugs will go a long way in the fight to dampen sound.
- Windows are a known weak point in many structures. Installing better windows, sealing window frames, or hanging curtains (even thin ones) will help reduce the sound coming from outside.
- If you have noisy neighbors on one side of you, put furniture or a big bookshelf (preferably full of books) against that wall.
- If you have laundry machines in a separate room, shut the door. Also try running appliances like dishwashers and bread machines when you're getting ready to leave the house for a bit. When you're gone they can make as much noise as they want.

3. Mask or cancel noise. Several options are available for you here. Some people like to create peaceful sounds around them. You can do this by hanging wind chimes, turning on a fan, or running a small water feature. It may seem paradoxical because you're creating more

noise, however these things help mask the more unpleasant sounds that may otherwise bother you.

- People who really need help tuning sounds out could opt for a white noise machine. White noise consists of sounds of all audible frequencies (the same way white light is a combination of all visible wavelengths). White noise is able to effectively mask most outside sounds. Many people who use such machines frequently report ‘not hearing anything at all’ including the noise machine.
- “Noise canceling” devices are also available. These devices use a microphone to intercept incoming sounds. Then they send out “anti-noise” signals to cancel the noise. Noise canceling headphones or smartphone apps are among the cheaper noise canceling options. Hearing aid type devices are also available, but are much more expensive

4. Earplugs. Sometimes the simplest solutions are the most effective. If nighttime noise keeps you awake, earplugs could be your ticket to sweet slumber. Just make sure you set your alarm loud enough. Earplugs can also be great if you are going to a noisy event or concert. They don’t block out all the noise; rather, they bring sounds down to a manageable level.

5. Move. This one sounds drastic, but it may be worth it. Sometimes barrier walls and thick curtains can only do so much (and we’re not about to line our walls with egg carton foam). While moving outside the city (or perhaps suburbs) will reduce your sound levels greatly, it is not possible for everyone. However, be aware that sound levels can vary quite a bit even within a city. You may not have to move very far to experience a significant drop in noise. Choosing a home away from aircraft paths, trains, highways, or industrial districts is your best bet. Several cities (such as San Francisco) have even published noise maps showing which streets and areas are the loudest.

Other advice

- There are two more things regarding your hearing that we want to mention:
- First, it is important to limit the volume of your electronic devices, especially headphones. Hearing loss is a result of cumulative noise over time—and there’s no reversing it. It’s good practice not to set the volume higher than you need to hear it. If

you can't hear because of the noise surrounding you, consider investing in a pair of noise canceling headphones.

- Most music players (such as iPods) have maximum volumes you can set to prevent you from turning them too loud. Noise induced hearing loss is increasing in children and adolescents. Right now, an estimated 80% of elementary school children use personal music players; experts believe this is part of the problem. Remember to limit their devices so they don't turn them too loud.
- Secondly, it may be a good investment to get your ears cleaned—as strange as it may sound. Large amounts of wax can cause an annoying ringing in the ears called tinnitus. Getting your ears cleaned might be a simple, but often overlooked, solution to an annoying problem. You can get your ears cleaned professionally by an audiologist or doctor. Home remedies, such as using Q-tips or ear candles are not recommended by medical professionals.

The National Environment (Noise Standards And Control)

Regulations, 2003.

(Under sections 28 and 107 of the National Environment Act Cap 153)

[21st March 2003]

PART I: PRELIMINARY.

1. Citation

These Regulations may be cited as the National Environment (Noise Standards and Control) Regulations, 2003.

2. Interpretation

(1) In these Regulations, unless the context otherwise requires -

"Act" means National Environment Act;

"annoyance" means a feeling of displeasure evoked by noise, or any feeling of resentment, discomfort or irritation occurring when noise intrudes into another person's thoughts or mood, or

interferes with any activity being done by the affected person;

"Authority" means the National Environment Management Authority established by section 4 of the Act and includes a person delegated to act on its behalf;

"court" means a court of competent jurisdiction;

"construction" includes erection, alteration, repair, dismantling, demolition, structural maintenance, painting, mowing, land-clearing, earth-moving, grading, excavating, laying of pipes and conduits whether above or below ground level, street and highway building, concreting, installation and alteration of equipment, and the structural installation of construction components and materials in any form or for any purpose that includes any work in connection with the construction;

"dBA" means the unit in decibels on the A scale for quiet sounds;

"decibels" means a dimensionless unit used in comparison of the magnitude of sound pressures or powers;

"District Environment Committee" means a District Environment Committee established under the National Environment Act, Cap 153;

"disturbance" means any act or instance of interrupting the rest, calm, attention or quiet of another person;

"Environmental Inspector" means an Environmental Inspector appointed under the National Environment Act, Cap 153;

"Executive Director" means the Executive Director of the Authority, or a person designated to act on his or her behalf;

"improvement notice" means a notice issued under regulation 16;

"impulsive noise" means a noise consisting of one or more bursts of sound energy of a duration of less than one second;

"intermittent noise" means a noise whose level suddenly drops to several times the level of the background noise;

"lead agency" means any agency to which the Authority delegates its functions under section 6 (2) of the Act;

"licence" means a licence to emit noise issued under regulation 12;

"licensee" means a person issued a licence under regulation 12;

"local council" means local government councils and administrative unit councils established under the Local Governments Act, Cap 153;

"Local Environment Committee" means a Local Environment Committee established under the National Environment Act, Cap 153;

"loudspeaker" means any electro-magnetic or electrical or mechanical device capable of converting electrical signals or energy into sound, and includes an amplifier, microphone, gramophone or similar instrument;

"musical instrument" means any article or thing adapted for use in making or reproducing musical sound and includes a radio receiver, television receiver, drum, keyboard, wind instrument, guitar, steel piano, cassette or compact disk player;

"microphone" means a transducer that converts an acoustic disturbance into an electrical output signal that is proportional to the acoustic disturbance;

"noise" means any unwanted and annoying sound that is intrinsically objectionable to human beings or which can have or is likely to have an adverse effect on human health or the environment;

"noise pollution" means the release of uncontrolled noise that is likely to cause danger to human health, or damage to the environment;

"occupier" in relation to any premises or facility, includes a tenant, agent, manager, foreman, or other person acting or apparently acting in the general management or control of the premises, or of any plant or facility or machinery;

"permissible noise levels" means the levels of noise prescribed by regulation 6;

"person responsible" in relation to the emission of noise, means the person to whose act, default or sufferance the noise is attributable;

"place of entertainment" means a building or other place where activities of amusement, entertaining, playing of music, dancing, performing of shows takes place;

"point of reception" means a point on any premises where sound or vibration originating from other premises or areas is received;

"pollution" means any direct or indirect alteration of the physical, thermal, chemical, biological or radioactive properties of any part of the environment by discharging or emitting noise so as to affect any beneficial use adversely, to cause a condition which is hazardous or potentially hazardous to public health, safety, or welfare, or to animals, birds, wildlife, fish or aquatic life, or to plants, or to cause a contravention of any condition, limitation, or restriction for which a licence is required under these Regulations;

"sound" means a fluctuation in pressure, particle displacement, or particle velocity propagated in

any medium, or the auditory sensation that may be produced;

"street" means a highway, road or path to which the public have access, and includes a bridge over which a street passes, and a privately owned road or path to which the public is granted access, whether generally or conditionally;

"vehicle" includes a machine or implement of any kind drawn or propelled along a street, whether by animal, mechanical, electrical or other motive power.

(2) Where more than one person is responsible for noise, these Regulations apply to each of those persons, whether or not the noise for which any one of them is responsible would itself amount to noise pollution or would result in a level of noise justifying action under these Regulations.

3. Purpose

The purpose of these Regulations is to ensure the maintenance of a healthy environment for all people in Uganda, the tranquility of their surroundings and their psychological well-being by regulating noise levels, and generally, to elevate the standard of living of the people by -

- prescribing the maximum permissible noise levels from a facility or activity to which a person may be exposed;
- providing for the control of noise and for mitigating measures for the reduction of noise; and
- generally for giving effect to the provisions of section 28 of the Act.

4. Functions and powers of local councils, Cap 243

- A local council may, in accordance with the Local Governments Act, make laws regulating noise and vibration pollution.
- Laws made by a local council under sub-regulation (1) shall not be inconsistent with the National Environment Act, Cap 153 or with these Regulations.

5. Functions of Environment Committees

(1) A District Environment Committee -

- (a) is responsible for co-ordinating, monitoring and advising the District Council on compliance with and enforcement of any law made in terms regulation 4; and
- (b) shall determine the times and places when noise may be emitted in its area of jurisdiction.

(2) A Local Environment Committee shall -

- (a) enforce and ensure compliance with the Regulations and any other law made in terms regulation 4:
- (b) investigate complaints relating to noise and can abatement of noise;
- (c) prohibit the continuation of undesirable activities which cause noise in excess of the permissible levels; and
- (d) exempt certain activities, including emergency situations and traditional community activities from the application of these Regulations.

Part II: Permissible Noise Levels.

6. Establishment of permissible noise levels.

7. The maximum noise levels from a facility in the general environment specified in Column 1 of Part I of the First Schedule to which a person may be exposed shall not exceed the level specified in Column 2 of that Part for the time specified that Part.

8. The maximum noise levels of continuous or intermittent noise from a factory or a workshop, to which person may be exposed shall not exceed the level specified in Column 1 of Part II of the First Schedule, for the time specified in Columns 2 and 3 of that Part.

9. The maximum noise level from impact or impulsive noise to which a person may be exposed shall be as specified in column 1 of Part III of the First Schedule for the permitted number of impulses or impacts emitted per day specified in Column 2 of that Part.

10. The maximum noise level from a construction site to which a person in a facility specified in Column 1 of Part IV of the First Schedule may be exposed, shall not exceed the level specified in Column 2 during the time specified in that Part.

11. The maximum noise level from a public announcement system or address system or device to which a person in the Noise Control Zone specified in Column 1 of Part V of the First Schedule may be exposed, shall not exceed the level specified in Column 2 during the time specified in that Part.

12. The maximum noise level from a place of entertainment or establishment to which a person in the Noise Control Zone specified in Column] of Part VI of the First Schedule may be exposed, shall not exceed the level specified in Column 2 during the time specified in that Part.

(7) The maximum noise level from a place or area of worship to which a person in the Noise Control Zone specified in Column 1 of Part VII of the First Schedule may be exposed shall not exceed the level specified in Column 2 during the time specified in that Part.

(8) The maximum noise level from an accelerating vehicle to which a person may be exposed in the category specified in Column 1 of Part, VIII of the First Schedule shall not exceed the level specified in Column 2 of that Part.

(9) The maximum noise level from a quarry or mine to which a person in the facility specified in Column 1 of Part IX of the First Schedule may be exposed shall not exceed the level specified in Column 2 of that Part.