



Noise in residential areas

Sport, entertainment, commercial and domestic activities can generate levels of noise ranging from being a nuisance to actually damaging people’s health. Neighbourhood noise (generated by air-conditioning units, stereos, maintenance work, hobbies, etc) is a common cause of noise related complaints.

The *Environment Protection Act 1997* (the Act) and the Environment Protection Regulation 2005, aim to protect people from undue noise whilst enabling them to carry out business and social activities.

This legislation does not apply to noise generated by aircraft (including hot air balloons), cars on public roads, animals and people (e.g. rowdy behaviour).

For enquiries or complaints regarding the types of noise below please ring:

- People noise- Australian Federal Police- ph. 6256 7777
- Animal noise- Domestic Animal Services- ph. 13 22 81
- Aircraft noise- (including hot air balloons)- ph. Air Services Australia 1800 802 584
- Traffic noise- Roads ACT- ph. 13 22 81
- Patron noise from licensed venue- Office of Regulatory Services – ph. 6207 3000.
- Other noise – Environment Protection Authority - ph. 13 22 81.

Noise standards established under the Act apply to any other noise generated within residential premises. Noise levels are measured in decibels dB(A). The following is a guide to different noise levels:

- Quiet bedroom: 20-30dB(A)
- Daytime levels in quiet residential area: 35-45dB(A)
- Lawn mower at 15 metres: 70dB(A)
- Jack hammer at 1 metre: 100dB(A)

Noise standards

Note: The following covers common residential situations only. Further information is available from the Environment Protection Authority (EPA).

The ACT has been divided into noise zones based on land uses listed in the Territory Plan. Noise Standards have been set for each zone based on planning guidelines, Australian standards, interstate practice and noise monitoring data.



Daytime noise levels in quiet residential area are normally 35-45 dB(A).

The standards permit the highest noise levels in industrial areas and are most stringent in residential areas. The following noise standards must not be exceeded at the property boundary of the land from where the noise is being emitted:

| Location | 7am–10pm (8am–10pm Sunday and Public Holidays) | 10pm–7am (10pm–8am Sunday and Public Holidays) |
|---|--|--|
| Civic centre and other major town centres (Belconnen, Gungahlin, Woden and Tuggeranong) | 60 dB(A) | 50dB(A) |
| Group centres such as Dickson and Kingston | 55 dB(A) | 45dB(A) |
| Smaller local centres such as Griffith and Lyneham | 50dB(A) | 35dB(A) |
| Residential Zones | 45dB(A) | 35dB(A) |

Additionally, if the noise is being emitted from a unit (such as a flat or a townhouse) located within a multi-unit complex, the noise standard is 5dB(A) lower and must comply inside any other unit in the same complex. Any noise generated within the common use areas of such complexes is a matter for the body corporate to deal with.

If a residence borders non-residential land (e.g. a residential block adjacent to local shops), or if it is located on non-residential land, different standards may apply.

Some activities, that are acceptable to the community, make noise above the permitted standards.

These activities may be conducted in residential areas provided they comply with the following conditions (see table on reverse side):



| Activity | Conditions |
|---|--|
| Garden maintenance* including lawnmowers and garden equipment | 7 am–8 pm Monday to Saturday, 8 am–8 pm Sunday and Public Holidays |
| Maintenance or repair work* including the use of power tools, etc | 7 am–8 pm Monday to Saturday, 8 am–8 pm Sunday and Public Holidays Noise exceeding the standard may only be emitted for up to 40 hours in any 8 week period. |
| New Year’s Eve Parties | 6 pm 31 December–12.30 am 1 January Any noise emitted must not exceed 60dB(A) at the property boundary. |
| Warming up of motor vehicle engines | May exceed the standard for no longer than 5 minutes except if the vehicle’s operating manual specifies a longer period. |
| Building work in residential areas | Completed in less than 2 weeks 7 am–8 pm Monday to Saturday, 8 am–8 pm Sunday and Public Holidays Taking more than 2 weeks to complete 7 am–6 pm Monday to Saturday No noise exceeding the standard permitted on Sundays and Public Holidays |
| Building work in industrial, city and town centre areas** | 6 am–8 pm Monday to Sunday and Public Holidays |
| Garbage collection in residential areas | 7 am–10 pm |
| Commercial garbage collection in**: | |
| Industrial areas | Anytime |
| City and Town Centres | 2 am–10 pm |
| Manuka and Kingston Group Centres | 5 am–10 pm |
| Other Group Centres | 6 am–10 pm |
| Building intruder alarm | May exceed the standard for no longer than 10 minutes if installed before 1 December 1997 or no longer than five minutes if installed after December 1997. |
| Motor vehicle intruder alarm | May exceed the standard for no longer than 90 seconds for a vehicle manufactured before 1 September 1997 or no longer than 45 seconds if manufactured on or after 1 September 1997. |

*Any equipment used must be maintained and operated according to the manufacturer’s specifications. **Please note that if a residence borders non-residential land (e.g. a residential block adjacent to local shops), or if it is located on non-residential land, different noise standards may apply for certain activities

Excessive noise – what can be done?

You should try to solve the problem by discussing it with the person causing the noise. Alternatively, you may wish to initiate mediation through the Conflict Resolution Service by phoning 6162 4050. Where the noise problem cannot be resolved through these mechanisms, you may lodge a complaint with the EPA. A complaint will be considered by the EPA only if it is made by a person affected by the noise.

To register a complaint, you must identify the source of the noise before phoning the EPA. The first stage in investigating the complaint is for the EPA to send out a letter to advise the alleged noise producer of their responsibilities under the Act and invite them to discuss the matter. In most cases the matter can be resolved at this stage.

Following this, if another noise complaint is received, the complaint needs to be validated by the EPA. This involves the EPA visiting the site and taking a valid noise measurement. If validated, a warning letter or fine may be issued, or, depending on the circumstances, an Environment Protection Order (EPO) may be issued. A breach of an EPO is a serious offence and could lead to prosecution in court.

Avoid producing excessive noise

When purchasing and installing reverse cycle air conditioners, heat pumps, pool pumps, evaporative coolers, etc, ensure that you consider the location in relation to neighbours. Seek advice from the installer on whether the unit will comply with noise standards in the proposed location, or refer to the Installation of Air Conditioners Information Sheet and the Fairair website at www.fairair.com.au.

For more information

Contact the EPA by calling Canberra Connect on 13 22 81 or email environment.protection@act.gov.au.

Go to www.environment.act.gov.au for other information relating to noise

- [Schedule 2 of the Environment Protection Regulation 2005.](#)
- [Noise Environment Protection Policy.](#)
- noise.act.gov.au