

Office

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION  
AGENCY  
02 JAN 2008

# Nevitt Lusk Action Group

Submission in objection to the application for a waste license by Murphy Concrete Manufacturing 1 Ltd ref :WO129-02 at Hollywood Great, Nags Head, The Naul, Co Dublin

Dear Sirs

On behalf of our local community we hereby object to this application on the following grounds and request that an oral hearing be held.

- At present Fingal County Council have applied to An Bord Pleanala for planning permission to develop a Public Landfill with expected intake of 500,000 tons per annum. This development is also subject to an application to the EPA for a waste license which is subject to appeal to the EPA and an oral hearing is pending.
- Fingal County Council have now also extended the original 36 month planning permission granted in 2004 at Baldaragh to A & T Tipper Hire Ltd by a further 24 months. Unfortunately this site intakes up to 50 trucks per day (per permit) however this is uncontrolled and opening hours, early morning queuing are common occurrences.
- Murphy Environmental application is also expected to have an intake of 500,000 tons per annum.
- Hedgestown National School has received approval from the Dept Of Education to build a new school which is on the Nevitt Road LPO1080. In fact its entrance will be in a very precarious junction and the risk from trucks will be exceedingly high. Indeed the noise levels from trucks will exceed WHO guidelines for community noise.
- Murphy Environmental has failed to establish the need to increase the size and rate of land filling activities.
- Murphy Environmental has failed to propose any mitigation measures, nor have they consulted with the local community regarding noise and air pollution from the Heavy Vehicle traffic on the Nevitt Road.

The above three Landfill developments all are within 0.6km of each other and will all use an inferior rural road network and the sum of all three developments combined will have severe impact on the local community. It is our opinion that all these developments are being treated as individual applications and no one is taking a holistic view of the combined impact of all developments.

The local community view this as inferior planning and for example while Murphy Environmental EIS selectively references the Fingal County Council EIS for their Landfill application this is an appallingly unprofessional approach as during the An Bord Pleanala hearing the Fingal County Council EIS was found to be deficient and inaccurate. A specific example was that the current statistics for capacity utilisation on the M1 from the National Roads Authority show that volume currently exceeds road design capacity and the EIS was using data 2 years out of date now Murphy Environmental wish to increase the number of trucks on the M1 and further reduce the Motorway carrying capacity. Murphy Environmental EIS makes no reference to impact on the M1 motorway in their application and this type of development contravenes National Roads Authority strategic plan. During the An Bord Pleanala oral hearing, Fingal County Council acknowledged that the local road network was inferior and that they saw the need to build a new county road to facilitate the traffic to and from their proposed landfill and this would include pedestrian/cycle lane with an over bridge to allow children attend Hedgestown National school, this now appears to be forgotten by all agencies. In addition the Department Of Environment have requested Fingal County Council to carry out further Archaeological studies on the Nevitt site as this is now deemed to be potentially a major site of equal importance with Tara and Murphy Environmental wish to put hundreds of trucks per day through the heart of the site. No decision should be made on Murphy Environmental application until this Archaeological study is completed and a final decision is made on the Fingal Landfill by An Bord Pleanala and the EPA.

Specific errors in Murphy Environmental EIS

It assumes the Baldaragh development will be closed and the number of trucks using the Nevitt Road LPO1080 will be reduced and all subsequent calculations re noise pollution and air pollution were based on inaccurate base data. In fact if all the traffic combined under the 3 developments was taken into account and the receptors used for analysis were based on those homes most impacted the results would be totally different.

There is no comprehensive health impact assessment or survey made of locally vulnerable residents, this is totally unacceptable.

**Page 114 of the EIS states**

“We have established from measurement the mean value of Sound Exposure Level for a HGV ‘drive by’ at low to moderate speeds (i.e. 15 to 50 kmph) is in the order of 83dB LAX at a distance of 5 metres from the vehicle. This figure is based on a series of measurements conducted under controlled conditions. We have assumed a ‘worst case’ scenario whereby 32 HGV vehicle trips per hour are made along the entrance roadway.

Taking into account the effect of site vehicle activity from the development, attenuation due to distance and nominal screening provided by the change in ground levels, the predicted noise level at the nearest residence south of the facility during the peak period is 28LAeq,1hr. The predicted noise level at the nearest residence south of the facility during the peak period is 26dB L LAeq,1hr.

These levels are well within the daytime criterion of 50dB LAeq,1hr. Therefore it may be

concluded that there will be no significant impact associated with vehicle movement on the site.”

**The above statement is a case of consultants generating assumptions that will provide outputs to meet their desired need. What empirical data supports the consultants assumption how do we know the equipment has been calibrated they, should be using academic references. Note the road LP01080 has a speed limit of 80 kmph and no trucks travel this road at 50kmph/ the following is a guideline for best practice in modeling**

## **Computer models for roadway noise**

Because of the complexity of the variables discussed, it is necessary to create a computer model that can analyze sound levels in the vicinity of roadways. The first meaningful models arose in the late 1960s and early 1970s addressing the noise line source (e.g. roadway). Two of the leading research teams were BBN in Boston and ESL of Sunnyvale, California. Both of these groups developed complex mathematical models to allow the study of alternate roadway designs, traffic operations and noise mitigation strategies in an arbitrary setting. Later model alterations have come into widespread use among state Departments of Transportation and city planners, but the accuracy of early models has had little change in 40 years.

Generally the models trace sound ray bundles and calculate spreading loss along with ray bundle divergence (or convergence) from refractive phenomena. Diffraction is usually addressed by establishing secondary emitters at any points of topographic or anthropomorphic “sharpness” (such as noise barriers or building surfaces). Meteorology can be addressed in a statistical manner allowing for actual wind rose and wind speed statistics (along with thermocline data).

From research the following is a recognized measurement for noise from Heavy Trucks(see attachment 1)

- **Heavy Trucks (HT):** Noise emitted from 6 to 8 feet above the roadway surface, combined noise sources includes tire-roadway interface, engine noise, and exhaust stack noise. This category includes all log-haul tractor-trailers (semi-trucks), large tow trucks, dump trucks, cement mixers, large transit buses, motor homes with exhaust located at top of vehicle, and other vehicles with the exhaust located above the vehicle (typical exhaust height of 12 to 15 feet). Typical noise levels for heavy trucks are 84 to 86 dBA at 55 mph at 50 feet z.

## **Possible mitigation measures that could be implemented to reduce traffic noise.**

### **Traffic Noise Mitigation**

In theory, there are a number of options that can be used to reduce or mitigate traffic noise. These include traffic management, highway design, and noise barriers including earthen berms. In reality, noise mitigation is often infeasible due to space requirements, aesthetic issues and financial costs, or because the costs outweigh the benefits. Any specific mitigation measure recommended as part of a project must be feasible and have a reasonable cost in relation to the benefit. Potential mitigation measures are described below.

- **Traffic Management:** Traffic management measures include modification of speed limits and restricting or prohibiting truck traffic. Restricting truck use on a given roadway would reduce noise levels at nearby receivers since trucks are louder than cars. However, displacing truck traffic from one roadway to another would only shift noise impacts from one area to another and may conflict with the planned function of the roadway (e.g., an arterial generally carries truck traffic). The level of truck traffic on Sunnyside Road is too low for truck restrictions to result in a significant reduction in overall noise in the area. While reducing speeds may reduce noise, a reduction of at least 10 mph is needed for a noticeable difference in noise to result. Also, because roadways are planned and designed to support speeds consistent with their functional classification (e.g., 35-45 mph on an arterial), changing speeds for the purpose of noise mitigation is not common.

- **Roadway Design:** Roadway design measures include altering the roadway alignment and depressing roadway cut sections. Alteration of roadway alignment could decrease noise levels by moving the traffic farther away from the affected receivers. Because there are noise sensitive receivers along both sides of Sunnyside Road, changing the alignment may benefit one side of Sunnyside Road, but would increase noise levels on the other.

- **Noise Barriers:** Construction of noise barriers between the roadways and the affected receivers would reduce noise levels by physically blocking the transmission of traffic-generated noise. Barriers can be constructed as walls or earthen berms. Earthen berms require more right-of-way than walls and are usually constructed with a 3-to-1 slope. Using this requirement, a berm 8 feet tall would slope 24 feet in each direction, for a total width of 48 feet. For the Sunnyside Road project, berms are not feasible because of the right-of-way requirement. Noise walls should be high enough to break the line-of-sight between the noise source and the receiver. They must also be long enough to prevent significant flanking of noise around the ends of the walls. Openings in the wall, such as for driveways and walkways, can significantly reduce the barrier effectiveness. Because of the frequent driveways and walkways on Sunnyside Road, noise walls would not be effective in most locations.

### **Please refer to attachment 2 World Health organization document on the Guidelines for Community Noise.**

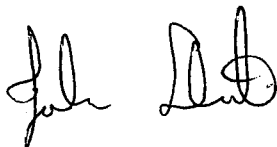
Clearly taking into account WHO guidelines the Murphy Environmental EIS is nothing more than a paper exercise which fails to deal with the substantive issue of impact on people and community and on this basis alone we call on the EPA to uphold the highest standards and refuse Murphy Environmental application and rescind their current license until a thorough investigation of the impact on the local community from all 3 Landfill developments in the area is undertaken.

It is clear that the EIS is erroneous, misleading and does not fully take into account the nuisance or health impact on the people living on the Nevitt Road, Murphy Environmental have neither offered to put in place any noise or pollution control measures and the EPA have not put in place any conditions that would ensure the residents health and safety. As there has been no community consultation or involvement to date in this process and this community is being continuously intimidated by development it is time that your agency truly evaluates what is going on and ensures that residents are fully protected from this piecemeal approach to planning.

**In summary it is imperative that the EPA refuse to grant a license to this application and rescind the current license and ensure all landfill developments in the area are jointly accessed to allow for informed decisions, and that the community are consulted and involved in the process.**

For and on behalf of Nevitt Lusk Action Group.

John Shortt 28<sup>th</sup> December 2007



WINDFIELD  
NEVITT  
LUSK  
Co. DUBLIN

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## Traffic Noise Background Information

### Introduction to Noise

Human response to noise is subjective and can vary greatly from person to person. Factors that can influence individual response include the loudness, frequency, and time pattern; the amount of background noise present before an intruding noise; and the nature of the activity (e.g., sleeping) that the noise affects.

The sensitivity of the human ear to sounds of different frequencies is measured by the A-weighted decibel scale (dBA). A 10-dBA change in noise levels is judged by most people as a doubling of sound level. The smallest change in noise level that a human ear can perceive is about 3-dBA. Increases of 5-dBA or more are clearly noticeable. Normal conversation ranges between 44 and 65 dBA when the people speaking are 3 to 6 feet apart.

Table 1 shows sound levels for some common noise sources and compares their relative loudness to that of an 80-dBA source such as a garbage disposal or food blender. Noise levels in a quiet rural area at night are typically between 32 and 35 dBA. Quiet urban nighttime noise levels range from 40 to 50 dBA. Noise levels during the day in a noisy urban area are frequently as high as 70 to 80 dBA. Noise levels above 110 dBA become intolerable and then painful; levels higher than 80 dBA over continuous periods can result in hearing loss. Constant noises tend to be less noticeable than irregular or periodic noises.

Table 1  
Sound Levels and Relative Loudness of Typical Noise Sources

Noise Source or Activity	Sound Level (dBA)	Subjective Impression	Relative Loudness (human judgment of different sound levels)
Jet aircraft takeoff from carrier (50 ft)	140	Threshold of pain	64 times as loud
50-hp siren (100 ft)	130		32 times as loud
Loud rock concert near stage, Jet takeoff (200 ft)	120	Uncomfortably loud	16 times as loud
Float plane takeoff (100 ft)	110		8 times as loud
Jet takeoff (2,000 ft)	100	Very loud	4 times as loud
Heavy truck or motorcycle (25 ft)	90		2 times as loud
Garbage disposal, food blender (2 ft), Pneumatic drill (50 ft)	80	Moderately loud	Reference loudness
Vacuum cleaner (10 ft), Passenger car at 65 mph (25 ft)	70		1/2 as loud
Large store air-conditioning unit (20 ft)	60		1/4 as loud
Light auto traffic (100 ft)	50	Quiet	1/8 as loud
Bedroom or quiet living room, Bird calls	40		1/16 as loud
Quiet library, soft whisper (15 ft)	30	Very quiet	
High quality recording studio	20		
Acoustic Test Chamber	10	Just audible	
	0	Threshold of hearing	

Sources: Beranek (1988) and EPA (1971)

## Traffic Noise Sources and Propagation

Noise sources associated with transportation projects can include passenger vehicles, medium trucks, heavy trucks and buses. Each of these vehicles produces noise; however, the source and magnitude of the noise can vary greatly depending on vehicle type. For example, while the noise from passenger vehicles occurs mainly from the tire-roadway interface and is therefore located at ground level, noise from heavy trucks is produced by a combination of noise from tires, engine, and exhaust, resulting in a noise source that is approximately 8 feet above the ground. The following list provides information on the types of transportation noise sources that will be part of a roadway project, and describes the type of noise each produces.

- Passenger Vehicles (cars):** *Noise emitted from 0 to 2 feet above roadway, primarily from tire-roadway interface.* This category includes normal passenger vehicles, small and regular pickup trucks, small to mid-size sport utility vehicles, mini- and full-size passenger vans. Typical noise levels for passenger vehicles are 72 to 74 dBA at 55 mph at a distance of 50 feet.
- Medium Trucks (MT):** *Noise emitted from 2 to 5 feet above roadway, combined noise from tire-roadway interface and engine exhaust noise.* This category includes delivery vans, such as UPS and Federal Express trucks, large sport utility vehicles with knobby tires, large diesel engine trucks, some tow-trucks, city transit and school buses with under vehicle exhaust, moving vans (U-haul-type trucks), small to medium recreational motor homes and other larger trucks with the exhaust located *under* the vehicle. Typical noise levels for medium trucks are 80 to 82 dBA at 55 mph at 50 feet.
- Heavy Trucks (HT):** Noise emitted from 6 to 8 feet above the roadway surface, combined noise sources includes tire-roadway interface, engine noise, and exhaust stack noise. This category includes all log-haul tractor-trailers (semi-trucks), large tow trucks, dump trucks, cement mixers, large transit buses, motor homes with exhaust located at top of vehicle, and other vehicles with the exhaust located above the vehicle (typical exhaust height of 12 to 15 feet). Typical noise levels for heavy trucks are 84 to 86 dBA at 55 mph at 50 feet<sup>2</sup>.

Several factors determine how sound levels decrease over distance. Under ideal conditions, a line noise source (such as constant flowing traffic on a busy highway) decreases at a rate of approximately 3 dB each time the distance doubles. Under real-life conditions, however, interactions of the sound waves with the ground often results in attenuation that is slightly greater than the *ideal* reduction factors given above. Other factors that affect the attenuation of sound with distance include existing structures, topography, foliage, ground cover, and atmospheric conditions such as wind, temperature, and relative humidity. The following list provides some general information on the potential affects each of these factors may have on sound propagation.

- Existing Structures.** Existing structures can have a substantial effect on noise levels in any given area. Structures can reduce noise by physically blocking the sound transmission. (Under special circumstances, structures may cause an increase in noise levels if the sound is reflected off the structure and transmitted to a nearby receiver location.) Measurements have shown that a single-story house has the potential, through shielding, to reduce noise levels by as much as 10 dB or greater. The actual noise reduction will depend greatly on the geometry of the noise source, receiver, and location of the structure. Increases in noise caused by reflection are normally 3 dB or less, which is the minimum change in noise levels that can be noticed by the human ear.
- Topography.** Topography includes existing hills, berms, and other surface features between the noise source and receiver location. As with structures, topography has the potential to reduce or increase sound depending on the geometry of the area. Hills and berms, when placed between the noise source and receiver, can have a significant effect on noise levels. In many situations, berms are used as noise mitigation by physically blocking the noise source from the receiver location. In

some locations, however, the topography can result in an overall increase in sound levels by either reflecting or channeling the noise towards a sensitive receiver location.

- **Foliage.** Foliage, if dense, can provide slight reductions in noise levels. FHWA provides for up to a 5 dBA reduction in traffic noise for locations with at least a 30 feet depth of dense evergreen foliage.
- **Ground Cover.** The ground cover between the receiver and the noise source can have a significant effect on noise transmission. For example, sound will travel very well across reflective surfaces such as water and pavement, but can be attenuated when the ground cover is field grass, lawns, or even loose soil.

### Traffic Noise Mitigation

In theory, there are a number of options that can be used to reduce or mitigate traffic noise. These include traffic management, highway design, and noise barriers including earthen berms. In reality, noise mitigation is often infeasible due to space requirements, aesthetic issues and financial costs, or because the costs outweigh the benefits. Any specific mitigation measure recommended as part of a project must be feasible and have a reasonable cost in relation to the benefit. Potential mitigation measures are described below.

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# GUIDELINES

FOR

## COMMUNITY NOISE

Edited by

**Birgitta Berglund**  
**Thomas Lindvall**  
**Dietrich H Schwela**

This WHO document on the *Guidelines for Community Noise* is the outcome of the WHO- expert task force meeting held in London, United Kingdom, in April 1999. It bases on the document entitled "Community Noise" that was prepared for the World Health Organization and published in 1995 by the Stockholm University and Karolinska Institute.



**World Health Organization, Geneva**  
Cluster of Sustainable Development and Healthy Environment (SDE)  
Department of the Protection of the Human Environment (PHE)  
Occupational and Environmental Health (OEH)

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword .....	iii
Preface.....	v
Executive Summary.....	vii
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Noise sources and their measurement .....	3
2.1. Basic Aspects of Acoustical Measurements.....	3
2.2. Sources of Noise.....	5
2.3. The Complexity of Noise and Its Practical Implications .....	8
2.4. Measurement Issues .....	11
2.5. Source Characteristics and Sound Propagation.....	14
2.6. Sound transmission Into and Within Buildings.....	15
2.7. More Specialized Noise Measures .....	17
2.8. Summary.....	19
3. Adverse Health Effects Of Noise.....	21
3.1. Introduction.....	21
3.2. Noise-Induced Hearing Impairment.....	21
3.3. Interference with Speech Communication.....	24
3.4. Sleep Disturbance.....	26
3.5. Cardiovascular and Physiological Effects.....	29
3.6. Mental Health Effects.....	30
3.7. The Effects of Noise on Performance.....	31
3.8. Effects of Noise on Residential Behaviour and Annoyance.....	32
3.9. The Effects of Combined Noise Sources .....	34
3.10. Vulnerable Groups .....	35
4. Guideline Values.....	37
4.1. Introduction.....	37
4.2. Specific Effects .....	38
4.3. Specific Environments .....	43
4.4. WHO Guideline Values .....	45
5. Noise Management.....	48
5.1. Stages in Noise Management .....	48
5.2. Noise Exposure Mapping.....	52
5.3. Noise Exposure Modeling.....	53
5.4. Noise Control Approaches.....	53
5.5. Evaluation of Control Options .....	56
5.6. Management of Indoor Noise.....	57
5.7. Priority Setting in Noise Management.....	60
5.8. Conclusions on Noise Management.....	70
6. Conclusions And Recommendations .....	72
6.1. Implementation of the Guidelines.....	72
6.2. Further WHO Work on Noise .....	73
6.3. Research Needs .....	73
Appendix 1 : Bibliographical References .....	77
Appendix 2 : Examples Of Regional Noise Situations .....	95

Appendix 3 : Glossary.....124  
Appendix 4 : Acronyms .....133  
Appendix 5 : Equations and other technical information.....136  
Appendix 6 : Participant list of THE WHO Expert Task Force meeting on Guidelines For  
Community Noise, 26-30 April 1999, MARC, London, UK .....140

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## Foreword

Noise has always been an important environmental problem for man. In ancient Rome, rules existed as to the noise emitted from the ironed wheels of wagons which battered the stones on the pavement, causing disruption of sleep and annoyance to the Romans. In Medieval Europe, horse carriages and horse back riding were not allowed during night time in certain cities to ensure a peaceful sleep for the inhabitants. However, the noise problems of the past are incomparable with those of modern society. An immense number of cars regularly cross our cities and the countryside. There are heavily laden lorries with diesel engines, badly silenced both for engine and exhaust noise, in cities and on highways day and night. Aircraft and trains add to the environmental noise scenario. In industry, machinery emits high noise levels and amusement centres and pleasure vehicles distract leisure time relaxation.

In comparison to other pollutants, the control of environmental noise has been hampered by insufficient knowledge of its effects on humans and of dose-response relationships as well as a lack of defined criteria. While it has been suggested that noise pollution is primarily a "luxury" problem for developed countries, one cannot ignore that the exposure is often higher in developing countries, due to bad planning and poor construction of buildings. The effects of the noise are just as widespread and the long term consequences for health are the same. In this perspective, practical action to limit and control the exposure to environmental noise are essential. Such action must be based upon proper scientific evaluation of available data on effects, and particularly dose-response relationships. The basis for this is the process of risk assessment and risk management.

The extent of the noise problem is large. In the European Union countries about 40 % of the population are exposed to road traffic noise with an equivalent sound pressure level exceeding 55 dB(A) daytime and 20 % are exposed to levels exceeding 65 dB(A). Taking all exposure to transportation noise together about half of the European Union citizens are estimated to live in zones which do not ensure acoustical comfort to residents. More than 30 % are exposed at night to equivalent sound pressure levels exceeding 55 dB(A) which are disturbing to sleep. The noise pollution problem is also severe in cities of developing countries and caused mainly by traffic. Data collected alongside densely travelled roads were found to have equivalent sound pressure levels for 24 hours of 75 to 80 dB(A).

The scope of WHO's effort to derive guidelines for community noise is to consolidate actual scientific knowledge on the health impacts of community noise and to provide guidance to environmental health authorities and professional trying to protect people from the harmful effects of noise in non-industrial environments. Guidance on the health effects of noise exposure of the population has already been given in an early publication of the series of Environmental Health Criteria. The health risk to humans from exposure to environmental noise was evaluated and guidelines values derived. The issue of noise control and health protection was briefly addressed.

At a WHO/EURO Task Force Meeting in Düsseldorf, Germany, in 1992, the health criteria and guideline values were revised and it was agreed upon updated guidelines in consensus. The essentials of the deliberations of the Task Force were published by Stockholm University and Karolinska Institute in 1995. In a recent Expert Task Force Meeting convened in April 1999 in London, United Kingdom, the Guidelines for Community Noise were extended to provide global coverage and applicability, and the issues of noise assessment and control were addressed in more detail. This document is the outcome of the consensus deliberations of the WHO Expert Task Force.

Dr Richard Helmer  
Director, Department of Protection of the Human Environment  
Cluster Sustainable Development and Healthy Environments

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## Preface

Community noise (also called environmental noise, residential noise or domestic noise) is defined as noise emitted from all sources except noise at the industrial workplace. Main sources of community noise include road, rail and air traffic, industries, construction and public work, and the neighbourhood. The main indoor sources of noise are ventilation systems, office machines, home appliances and neighbours. Typical neighbourhood noise comes from premises and installations related to the catering trade (restaurant, cafeterias, discotheques, etc.); from live or recorded music; sport events including motor sports; playgrounds; car parks; and domestic animals such as barking dogs. Many countries have regulated community noise from road and rail traffic, construction machines and industrial plants by applying emission standards, and by regulating the acoustical properties of buildings. In contrast, few countries have regulations on community noise from the neighbourhood, probably due to the lack of methods to define and measure it, and to the difficulty of controlling it. In large cities throughout the world, the general population is increasingly exposed to community noise due to the sources mentioned above and the health effects of these exposures are considered to be a more and more important public health problem. Specific effects to be considered when setting community noise guidelines include: interference with communication; noise-induced hearing loss; sleep disturbance effects; cardiovascular and psychophysiological effects; performance reduction effects; annoyance responses; and effects on social behaviour.

Since 1980, the World Health Organization (WHO) has addressed the problem of community noise. Health-based guidelines on community noise can serve as the basis for deriving noise standards within a framework of noise management. Key issues of noise management include abatement options; models for forecasting and for assessing source control action; setting noise emission standards for existing and planned sources; noise exposure assessment; and testing the compliance of noise exposure with noise emission standards. In 1992, the WHO Regional Office for Europe convened a task force meeting which set up guidelines for community noise. A preliminary publication of the Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, on behalf of WHO, appeared in 1995. This publication served as the basis for the globally applicable *Guidelines for Community Noise* presented in this document. An expert task force meeting was convened by WHO in March 1999 in London, United Kingdom, to finalize the guidelines.

The *Guidelines for Community Noise* have been prepared as a practical response to the need for action on community noise at the local level, as well as the need for improved legislation, management and guidance at the national and regional levels. WHO will be pleased to see that these guidelines are used widely. Continuing efforts will be made to improve its content and structure. It would be appreciated if the users of the *Guidelines* provide feedback from its use and their own experiences. Please send your comments and suggestions on the WHO *Guidelines for Community Noise – Guideline document* to the Department of the Protection of the Human Environment, Occupational and Environmental Health, World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland (Fax: +41 22-791 4123, e-mail: [schwelad@who.int](mailto:schwelad@who.int)).

## Acknowledgements

The World Health Organization thanks all who have contributed to the preparation of this document, *Guidelines for Community Noise*. The international, multidisciplinary group of contributors to, and reviewers of, the *Guidelines* are listed in the "Participant list" in Annex 6. Special thanks are due to the chairpersons and workgroups of the WHO expert task force meeting held in London, United Kingdom, in March 1999: Professor Thomas Lindvall, who acted as the chairperson of the meeting, Professor Birgitta Berglund, Dr John Bradley and Professor Gerd Jansen, who chaired the three workgroups. Special contributions from those who provided the background papers and who contributed to the success of the WHO expert meeting are gratefully acknowledged:

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Frits van den Berg, Science Shop for Physics, University of Groningen, Groningen, The Netherlands;  
Professor Peter Williams, Director MARC, King's College London, UK;  
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Particular thanks are due to the Ministry of Environment of Germany, which provided the funding to convene the WHO expert task force meeting in London, United Kingdom, in March 1999 to produce the *Guidelines for Community Noise*.

## Executive Summary

### 1. Introduction

Community noise (also called environmental noise, residential noise or domestic noise) is defined as noise emitted from all sources except noise at the industrial workplace. Main sources of community noise include road, rail and air traffic; industries; construction and public work; and the neighbourhood. The main indoor noise sources are ventilation systems, office machines, home appliances and neighbours.

In the European Union about 40% of the population is exposed to road traffic noise with an equivalent sound pressure level exceeding 55 dB(A) daytime, and 20% are exposed to levels exceeding 65 dB(A). When all transportation noise is considered, more than half of all European Union citizens is estimated to live in zones that do not ensure acoustical comfort to residents. At night, more than 30% are exposed to equivalent sound pressure levels exceeding 55 dB(A), which are disturbing to sleep. Noise pollution is also severe in cities of developing countries. It is caused mainly by traffic and alongside densely-travelled roads equivalent sound pressure levels for 24 hours can reach 75–80 dB(A).

In contrast to many other environmental problems, noise pollution continues to grow and it is accompanied by an increasing number of complaints from people exposed to the noise. The growth in noise pollution is unsustainable because it involves direct, as well as cumulative, adverse health effects. It also adversely affects future generations, and has socio-cultural, esthetic and economic effects.

### 2. Noise sources and measurement

Physically, there is no distinction between sound and noise. Sound is a sensory perception and the complex pattern of sound waves is labeled noise, music, speech etc. Noise is thus defined as unwanted sound.

Most environmental noises can be approximately described by several simple measures. All measures consider the frequency content of the sounds, the overall sound pressure levels and the variation of these levels with time. Sound pressure is a basic measure of the vibrations of air that make up sound. Because the range of sound pressures that human listeners can detect is very wide, these levels are measured on a logarithmic scale with units of decibels. Consequently, sound pressure levels cannot be added or averaged arithmetically. Also, the sound levels of most noises vary with time, and when sound pressure levels are calculated, the instantaneous pressure fluctuations must be integrated over some time interval.

Most environmental sounds are made up of a complex mix of many different frequencies. Frequency refers to the number of vibrations per second of the air in which the sound is propagating and it is measured in Hertz (Hz). The audible frequency range is normally considered to be 20–20 000 Hz for younger listeners with unimpaired hearing. However, our hearing systems are not equally sensitive to all sound frequencies, and to compensate for this various types of filters or frequency weighting have been used to determine the relative strengths of frequency components making up a particular environmental noise. The A-weighting is most commonly used and weights lower frequencies as less important than mid- and higher-frequencies. It is intended to approximate the frequency response of our hearing system.

The effect of a combination of noise events is related to the combined sound energy of those events (the equal energy principle). The sum of the total energy over some time period gives a level equivalent to the average sound energy over that period. Thus,  $L_{Aeq,T}$  is the energy average equivalent level of the A-weighted sound over a period T.  $L_{Aeq,T}$  should be used to measure continuing sounds, such as road traffic noise or types of more-or-less continuous industrial noises. However, when there are distinct events to the noise, as with aircraft or railway noise, measures of individual events such as the maximum



noise level (L<sub>Amax</sub>), or the weighted sound exposure level (SEL), should also be obtained in addition to L<sub>Aeq,T</sub>. Time-varying environmental sound levels have also been described in terms of percentile levels.

Currently, the recommended practice is to assume that the equal energy principle is approximately valid for most types of noise and that a simple L<sub>Aeq,T</sub> measure will indicate the expected effects of the noise reasonably well. When the noise consists of a small number of discrete events, the A-weighted maximum level (L<sub>Amax</sub>) is a better indicator of the disturbance to sleep and other activities. In most cases, however, the A-weighted sound exposure level (SEL) provides a more consistent measure of single-noise events because it is based on integration over the complete noise event. In combining day and night L<sub>Aeq,T</sub> values, night-time weightings are often added. Night-time weightings are intended to reflect the expected increased sensitivity to annoyance at night, but they do not protect people from sleep disturbance.

Where there are no clear reasons for using other measures, it is recommended that L<sub>Aeq,T</sub> be used to evaluate more-or-less continuous environmental noises. Where the noise is principally composed of a small number of discrete events, the additional use of L<sub>Amax</sub> or SEL is recommended. There are definite limitations to these simple measures, but there are also many practical advantages, including economy and the benefits of a standardized approach.

### 3. Adverse health effects of noise

The health significance of noise pollution is given in chapter 3 of the *Guidelines* under separate headings according to the specific effects: noise-induced hearing impairment; interference with speech communication; disturbance of rest and sleep; psychophysiological, mental-health and performance effects; effects on residential behaviour and annoyance; and interference with intended activities. This chapter also considers vulnerable groups and the combined effects of mixed noise sources.

*Hearing impairment* is typically defined as an increase in the threshold of hearing. Hearing deficits may be accompanied by tinnitus (ringing in the ears). Noise-induced hearing impairment occurs predominantly in the higher frequency range of 3 000–6 000 Hz, with the largest effect at 4 000 Hz. But with increasing L<sub>Aeq,8h</sub> and increasing exposure time, noise-induced hearing impairment occurs even at frequencies as low as 2 000 Hz. However, hearing impairment is not expected to occur at L<sub>Aeq,8h</sub> levels of 75 dB(A) or below, even for prolonged occupational noise exposure.

Worldwide, noise-induced hearing impairment is the most prevalent irreversible occupational hazard and it is estimated that 120 million people worldwide have disabling hearing difficulties. In developing countries, not only occupational noise but also environmental noise is an increasing risk factor for hearing impairment. Hearing damage can also be caused by certain diseases, some industrial chemicals, ototoxic drugs, blows to the head, accidents and hereditary origins. Hearing deterioration is also associated with the ageing process itself (presbycusis).

The extent of hearing impairment in populations exposed to occupational noise depends on the value of L<sub>Aeq,8h</sub>, the number of noise-exposed years, and on individual susceptibility. Men and women are equally at risk for noise-induced hearing impairment. It is expected that environmental and leisure-time noise with a L<sub>Aeq,24h</sub> of 70 dB(A) or below will not cause hearing impairment in the large majority of people, even after a lifetime exposure. For adults exposed to impulse noise at the workplace, the noise limit is set at peak sound pressure levels of 140 dB, and the same limit is assumed to be appropriate for environmental and leisure-time noise. In the case of children, however, taking into account their habits while playing with noisy toys, the peak sound pressure should never exceed 120 dB. For shooting noise with L<sub>Aeq,24h</sub> levels greater than 80 dB(A), there may be an increased risk for noise-induced hearing impairment.

The main social consequence of hearing impairment is the inability to understand speech in daily living conditions, and this is considered to be a severe social handicap. Even small values of hearing impairment (10 dB averaged over 2 000 and 4 000 Hz and over both ears) may adversely affect speech comprehension.

*Speech intelligibility* is adversely affected by noise. Most of the acoustical energy of speech is in the frequency range of 100–6 000 Hz, with the most important cue-bearing energy being between 300–3 000 Hz. Speech interference is basically a masking process, in which simultaneous interfering noise renders speech incapable of being understood. Environmental noise may also mask other acoustical signals that are important for daily life, such as door bells, telephone signals, alarm clocks, fire alarms and other warning signals, and music.

Speech intelligibility in everyday living conditions is influenced by speech level; speech pronunciation; talker-to-listener distance; sound level and other characteristics of the interfering noise; hearing acuity; and by the level of attention. Indoors, speech communication is also affected by the reverberation characteristics of the room. Reverberation times over 1 s produce loss in speech discrimination and make speech perception more difficult and straining. For full sentence intelligibility in listeners with normal hearing, the signal-to-noise ratio (i.e. the difference between the speech level and the sound level of the interfering noise) should be at least 15 dB(A). Since the sound pressure level of normal speech is about 50 dB(A), noise with sound levels of 35 dB(A) or more interferes with the intelligibility of speech in smaller rooms. For vulnerable groups even lower background levels are needed, and a reverberation time below 0.6 s is desirable for adequate speech intelligibility, even in a quiet environment.

The inability to understand speech results in a large number of personal handicaps and behavioural changes. Particularly vulnerable are the hearing impaired, the elderly, children in the process of language and reading acquisition, and individuals who are not familiar with the spoken language.

*Sleep disturbance* is a major effect of environmental noise. It may cause primary effects during sleep, and secondary effects that can be assessed the day after night-time noise exposure. Uninterrupted sleep is a prerequisite for good physiological and mental functioning, and the primary effects of sleep disturbance are: difficulty in falling asleep; awakenings and alterations of sleep stages or depth; increased blood pressure, heart rate and finger pulse amplitude; vasoconstriction; changes in respiration; cardiac arrhythmia; and increased body movements. The difference between the sound levels of a noise event and background sound levels, rather than the absolute noise level, may determine the reaction probability. The probability of being awakened increases with the number of noise events per night. The secondary, or after-effects, the following morning or day(s) are: reduced perceived sleep quality; increased fatigue; depressed mood or well-being; and decreased performance.

For a good night's sleep, the equivalent sound level should not exceed 30 dB(A) for continuous background noise, and individual noise events exceeding 45 dB(A) should be avoided. In setting limits for single night-time noise exposures, the intermittent character of the noise has to be taken into account. This can be achieved, for example, by measuring the number of noise events, as well as the difference between the maximum sound level and the background sound level. Special attention should also be given to: noise sources in an environment with low background sound levels; combinations of noise and vibrations; and to noise sources with low-frequency components.

*Physiological Functions.* In workers exposed to noise, and in people living near airports, industries and noisy streets, noise exposure may have a large temporary, as well as permanent, impact on physiological functions. After prolonged exposure, susceptible individuals in the general population may develop permanent effects, such as hypertension and ischaemic heart disease associated with exposure to high sound levels. The magnitude and duration of the effects are determined in part by individual characteristics, lifestyle behaviours and environmental conditions. Sounds also evoke reflex responses, particularly when they are unfamiliar and have a sudden onset.

Workers exposed to high levels of industrial noise for 5–30 years may show increased blood pressure and an increased risk for hypertension. Cardiovascular effects have also been demonstrated after long-term exposure to air- and road-traffic with LAeq,24h values of 65–70 dB(A). Although the associations are weak, the effect is somewhat stronger for ischaemic heart disease than for hypertension. Still, these small risk increments are important because a large number of people are exposed.

*Mental Illness.* Environmental noise is not believed to cause mental illness directly, but it is assumed that it can accelerate and intensify the development of latent mental disorders. Exposure to high levels of occupational noise has been associated with development of neurosis, but the findings on environmental noise and mental-health effects are inconclusive. Nevertheless, studies on the use of drugs such as tranquillizers and sleeping pills, on psychiatric symptoms and on mental hospital admission rates, suggest that community noise may have adverse effects on mental health.

*Performance.* It has been shown, mainly in workers and children, that noise can adversely affect performance of cognitive tasks. Although noise-induced arousal may produce better performance in simple tasks in the short term, cognitive performance substantially deteriorates for more complex tasks. Reading, attention, problem solving and memorization are among the cognitive effects most strongly affected by noise. Noise can also act as a distracting stimulus and impulsive noise events may produce disruptive effects as a result of startle responses.

Noise exposure may also produce after-effects that negatively affect performance. In schools around airports, children chronically exposed to aircraft noise under-perform in proof reading, in persistence on challenging puzzles, in tests of reading acquisition and in motivational capabilities. It is crucial to recognize that some of the adaptation strategies to aircraft noise, and the effort necessary to maintain task performance, come at a price. Children from noisier areas have heightened sympathetic arousal, as indicated by increased stress hormone levels, and elevated resting blood pressure. Noise may also produce impairments and increase in errors at work, and some accidents may be an indicator of performance deficits.

*Social and Behavioural Effects of Noise; Annoyance.* Noise can produce a number of social and behavioural effects as well as annoyance. These effects are often complex, subtle and indirect and many effects are assumed to result from the interaction of a number of non-auditory variables. The effect of community noise on annoyance can be evaluated by questionnaires or by assessing the disturbance of specific activities. However, it should be recognized that equal levels of different traffic and industrial noises cause different magnitudes of annoyance. This is because annoyance in populations varies not only with the characteristics of the noise, including the noise source, but also depends to a large degree on many non-acoustical factors of a social, psychological, or economic nature. The correlation between noise exposure and general annoyance is much higher at group level than at individual level. Noise above 80 dB(A) may also reduce helping behaviour and increase aggressive behaviour. There is particular concern that high-level continuous noise exposures may increase the susceptibility of schoolchildren to feelings of helplessness.

Stronger reactions have been observed when noise is accompanied by vibrations and contains low-frequency components, or when the noise contains impulses, such as with shooting noise. Temporary, stronger reactions occur when the noise exposure increases over time, compared to a constant noise exposure. In most cases, LAeq,24h and L<sub>dn</sub> are acceptable approximations of noise exposure related to annoyance. However, there is growing concern that all the component parameters should be individually assessed in noise exposure investigations, at least in the complex cases. There is no consensus on a model for total annoyance due to a combination of environmental noise sources.

*Combined Effects on Health of Noise from Mixed Sources.* Many acoustical environments consist of sounds from more than one source, i.e. there are mixed sources, and some combinations of effects are common. For example, noise may interfere with speech in the day and create sleep disturbance at night.

These conditions certainly apply to residential areas heavily polluted with noise. Therefore, it is important that the total adverse health load of noise be considered over 24 hours, and that the precautionary principle for sustainable development be applied.

*Vulnerable Subgroups.* Vulnerable subgroups of the general population should be considered when recommending noise protection or noise regulations. The types of noise effects, specific environments and specific lifestyles are all factors that should be addressed for these subgroups. Examples of vulnerable subgroups are: people with particular diseases or medical problems (e.g. high blood pressure); people in hospitals or rehabilitating at home; people dealing with complex cognitive tasks; the blind; people with hearing impairment; fetuses, babies and young children; and the elderly in general. People with impaired hearing are the most adversely affected with respect to speech intelligibility. Even slight hearing impairments in the high-frequency sound range may cause problems with speech perception in a noisy environment. A majority of the population belongs to the subgroup that is vulnerable to speech interference.

#### 4. Guideline values

In chapter 4, guideline values are given for specific health effects of noise and for specific environments.

##### Specific health effects.

*Interference with Speech Perception.* A majority of the population is susceptible to speech interference by noise and belongs to a vulnerable subgroup. Most sensitive are the elderly and persons with impaired hearing. Even slight hearing impairments in the high-frequency range may cause problems with speech perception in a noisy environment. From about 40 years of age, the ability of people to interpret difficult, spoken messages with low linguistic redundancy is impaired compared to people 20–30 years old. It has also been shown that high noise levels and long reverberation times have more adverse effects in children, who have not completed language acquisition, than in young adults.

When listening to complicated messages (at school, foreign languages, telephone conversation) the signal-to-noise ratio should be at least 15 dB with a voice level of 50 dB(A). This sound level corresponds on average to a casual voice level in both women and men at 1 m distance. Consequently, for clear speech perception the background noise level should not exceed 35 dB(A). In classrooms or conference rooms, where speech perception is of paramount importance, or for sensitive groups, background noise levels should be as low as possible. Reverberation times below 1 s are also necessary for good speech intelligibility in smaller rooms. For sensitive groups, such as the elderly, a reverberation time below 0.6 s is desirable for adequate speech intelligibility even in a quiet environment.

*Hearing Impairment.* Noise that gives rise to hearing impairment is by no means restricted to occupational situations. High noise levels can also occur in open air concerts, discotheques, motor sports, shooting ranges, in dwellings from loudspeakers, or from leisure activities. Other important sources of loud noise are headphones, as well as toys and fireworks which can emit impulse noise. The ISO standard 1999 gives a method for estimating noise-induced hearing impairment in populations exposed to all types of noise (continuous, intermittent, impulse) during working hours. However, the evidence strongly suggests that this method should also be used to calculate hearing impairment due to noise exposure from environmental and leisure time activities. The ISO standard 1999 implies that long-term exposure to LAeq,24h noise levels of up to 70 dB(A) will not result in hearing impairment. To avoid hearing loss from impulse noise exposure, peak sound pressures should never exceed 140 dB for adults, and 120 dB for children.

*Sleep Disturbance.* Measurable effects of noise on sleep begin at LAeq levels of about 30 dB. However, the more intense the background noise, the more disturbing is its effect on sleep. Sensitive groups mainly include the elderly, shift workers, people with physical or mental disorders and other individuals who have difficulty sleeping.

Sleep disturbance from intermittent noise events increases with the maximum noise level. Even if the total equivalent noise level is fairly low, a small number of noise events with a high maximum sound pressure level will affect sleep. Therefore, to avoid sleep disturbance, guidelines for community noise should be expressed in terms of the equivalent sound level of the noise, as well as in terms of maximum noise levels and the number of noise events. It should be noted that low-frequency noise, for example, from ventilation systems, can disturb rest and sleep even at low sound pressure levels.

When noise is continuous, the equivalent sound pressure level should not exceed 30 dB(A) indoors, if negative effects on sleep are to be avoided. For noise with a large proportion of low-frequency sound a still lower guideline value is recommended. When the background noise is low, noise exceeding 45 dB LAmax should be limited, if possible, and for sensitive persons an even lower limit is preferred. Noise mitigation targeted to the first part of the night is believed to be an effective means for helping people fall asleep. It should be noted that the adverse effect of noise partly depends on the nature of the source. A special situation is for newborns in incubators, for which the noise can cause sleep disturbance and other health effects.

*Reading Acquisition.* Chronic exposure to noise during early childhood appears to impair reading acquisition and reduces motivational capabilities. Evidence indicates that the longer the exposure, the greater the damage. Of recent concern are the concomitant psychophysiological changes (blood pressure and stress hormone levels). There is insufficient information on these effects to set specific guideline values. It is clear, however, that daycare centres and schools should not be located near major noise sources, such as highways, airports, and industrial sites.

*Annoyance.* The capacity of a noise to induce annoyance depends upon its physical characteristics, including the sound pressure level, spectral characteristics and variations of these properties with time. During daytime, few people are highly annoyed at LAeq levels below 55 dB(A), and few are moderately annoyed at LAeq levels below 50 dB(A). Sound levels during the evening and night should be 5–10 dB lower than during the day. Noise with low-frequency components require lower guideline values. For intermittent noise, it is emphasized that it is necessary to take into account both the maximum sound pressure level and the number of noise events. Guidelines or noise abatement measures should also take into account residential outdoor activities.

*Social Behaviour.* The effects of environmental noise may be evaluated by assessing its interference with social behavior and other activities. For many community noises, interference with rest/recreation/watching television seem to be the most important effects. There is fairly consistent evidence that noise above 80 dB(A) causes reduced helping behavior, and that loud noise also increases aggressive behavior in individuals predisposed to aggressiveness. In schoolchildren, there is also concern that high levels of chronic noise contribute to feelings of helplessness. Guidelines on this issue, together with cardiovascular and mental effects, must await further research.

### **Specific environments.**

A noise measure based only on energy summation and expressed as the conventional equivalent measure, LAeq, is not enough to characterize most noise environments. It is equally important to measure the maximum values of noise fluctuations, preferably combined with a measure of the number of noise events. If the noise includes a large proportion of low-frequency components, still lower values than the guideline values below will be needed. When prominent low-frequency components are present, noise

measures based on A-weighting are inappropriate. The difference between dB(C) and dB(A) will give crude information about the presence of low-frequency components in noise, but if the difference is more than 10 dB, it is recommended that a frequency analysis of the noise be performed. It should be noted that a large proportion of low-frequency components in noise may increase considerably the adverse effects on health.

*In Dwellings.* The effects of noise in dwellings, typically, are sleep disturbance, annoyance and speech interference. For bedrooms the critical effect is sleep disturbance. Indoor guideline values for bedrooms are 30 dB LAeq for continuous noise and 45 dB L<sub>Amax</sub> for single sound events. Lower noise levels may be disturbing depending on the nature of the noise source. At night-time, outside sound levels about 1 metre from facades of living spaces should not exceed 45 dB LAeq, so that people may sleep with bedroom windows open. This value was obtained by assuming that the noise reduction from outside to inside with the window open is 15 dB. To enable casual conversation indoors during daytime, the sound level of interfering noise should not exceed 35 dB LAeq. The maximum sound pressure level should be measured with the sound pressure meter set at "Fast".

To protect the majority of people from being seriously annoyed during the daytime, the outdoor sound level from steady, continuous noise should not exceed 55 dB LAeq on balconies, terraces and in outdoor living areas. To protect the majority of people from being moderately annoyed during the daytime, the outdoor sound level should not exceed 50 dB LAeq. Where it is practical and feasible, the lower outdoor sound level should be considered the maximum desirable sound level for new development.

*In Schools and Preschools.* For schools, the critical effects of noise are speech interference, disturbance of information extraction (e.g. comprehension and reading acquisition), message communication and annoyance. To be able to hear and understand spoken messages in class rooms, the background sound level should not exceed 35 dB LAeq during teaching sessions. For hearing impaired children, a still lower sound level may be needed. The reverberation time in the classroom should be about 0.6 s, and preferably lower for hearing impaired children. For assembly halls and cafeterias in school buildings, the reverberation time should be less than 1 s. For outdoor playgrounds the sound level of the noise from external sources should not exceed 55 dB LAeq, the same value given for outdoor residential areas in daytime.

For preschools, the same critical effects and guideline values apply as for schools. In bedrooms in preschools during sleeping hours, the guideline values for bedrooms in dwellings should be used.

*In Hospitals.* For most spaces in hospitals, the critical effects are sleep disturbance, annoyance, and communication interference, including warning signals. The L<sub>Amax</sub> of sound events during the night should not exceed 40 dB(A) indoors. For ward rooms in hospitals, the guideline values indoors are 30dB LAeq, together with 40 dB L<sub>Amax</sub> during night. During the day and evening the guideline value indoors is 30 dB LAeq. The maximum level should be measured with the sound pressure instrument set at "Fast".

Since patients have less ability to cope with stress, the LAeq level should not exceed 35 dB in most rooms in which patients are being treated or observed. Attention should be given to the sound levels in intensive care units and operating theaters. Sound inside incubators may result in health problems for neonates, including sleep disturbance, and may also lead to hearing impairment. Guideline values for sound levels in incubators must await future research.

*Ceremonies, Festivals and Entertainment Events.* In many countries, there are regular ceremonies, festivals and entertainment events to celebrate life periods. Such events typically produce loud sounds, including music and impulsive sounds. There is widespread concern about the effect of loud music and impulsive sounds on young people who frequently attend concerts, discotheques, video arcades, cinemas, amusement parks and spectator events. At these events, the sound level typically exceeds 100 dB LAeq. Such noise exposure could lead to significant hearing impairment after frequent attendances.

Noise exposure for employees of these venues should be controlled by established occupational standards; and at the very least, the same standards should apply to the patrons of these premises. Patrons should not be exposed to sound levels greater than 100 dB LAeq during a four-hour period more than four times per year. To avoid acute hearing impairment the LMax should always be below 110 dB.

*Headphones.* To avoid hearing impairment from music played back in headphones, in both adults and children, the equivalent sound level over 24 hours should not exceed 70 dB(A). This implies that for a daily one hour exposure the LAeq level should not exceed 85 dB(A). To avoid acute hearing impairment LMax should always be below 110 dB(A). The exposures are expressed in free-field equivalent sound level.

*Toys, Fireworks and Firearms.* To avoid acute mechanical damage to the inner ear from impulsive sounds from toys, fireworks and firearms, adults should never be exposed to more than 140 dB(lin) peak sound pressure level. To account for the vulnerability in children when playing, the peak sound pressure produced by toys should not exceed 120 dB(lin), measured close to the ears (100 mm). To avoid acute hearing impairment LMax should always be below 110 dB(A).

*Parkland and Conservation Areas.* Existing large quiet outdoor areas should be preserved and the signal-to-noise ratio kept low.

Table 1 presents the WHO guideline values arranged according to specific environments and critical health effects. The guideline values consider all identified adverse health effects for the specific environment. An adverse effect of noise refers to any temporary or long-term impairment of physical, psychological or social functioning that is associated with noise exposure. Specific noise limits have been set for each health effect, using the lowest noise level that produces an adverse health effect (i.e. the critical health effect). Although the guideline values refer to sound levels impacting the most exposed receiver at the listed environments, they are applicable to the general population. The time base for LAeq for "daytime" and "night-time" is 12–16 hours and 8 hours, respectively. No time base is given for evenings, but typically the guideline value should be 5–10 dB lower than in the daytime. Other time bases are recommended for schools, preschools and playgrounds, depending on activity.

It is not enough to characterize the noise environment in terms of noise measures or indices based only on energy summation (e.g., LAeq), because different critical health effects require different descriptions. It is equally important to display the maximum values of the noise fluctuations, preferably combined with a measure of the number of noise events. A separate characterization of night-time noise exposures is also necessary. For indoor environments, reverberation time is also an important factor for things such as speech intelligibility. If the noise includes a large proportion of low-frequency components, still lower guideline values should be applied. Supplementary to the guideline values given in Table 1, precautions should be taken for vulnerable groups and for noise of certain character (e.g. low-frequency components, low background noise).

**Table 1: Guideline values for community noise in specific environments.**

Specific environment	Critical health effect(s)	L <sub>Aeq</sub> [dB(A)]	Time base [hours]	L <sub>Amax</sub> fast [dB]
Outdoor living area	Serious annoyance, daytime and evening	55	16	-
	Moderate annoyance, daytime and evening	50	16	-
Dwelling, indoors	Speech intelligibility & moderate annoyance, daytime & evening	35	16	
Inside bedrooms	Sleep disturbance, night-time	30	8	45
Outside bedrooms	Sleep disturbance, window open (outdoor values)	45	8	60
School class rooms & pre-schools, indoors	Speech intelligibility, disturbance of information extraction, message communication	35	during class	-
Pre-school bedrooms, indoor	Sleep disturbance	30	sleeping-time	45
School, playground outdoor	Annoyance (external source)	55	during play	-
Hospital, ward rooms, indoors	Sleep disturbance, night-time	30	8	40
	Sleep disturbance, daytime and evenings	30	16	-
Hospitals, treatment rooms, indoors	Interference with rest and recovery	#1		
Industrial, commercial shopping and traffic areas, indoors and outdoors	Hearing impairment	70	24	110
Ceremonies, festivals and entertainment events	Hearing impairment (patrons:<5 times/year)	100	4	110
Public addresses, indoors and outdoors	Hearing impairment	85	1	110
Music and other sounds through headphones/earphones	Hearing impairment (free-field value)	85 #4	1	110
Impulse sounds from toys, fireworks and firearms	Hearing impairment (adults)	-	-	140 #2
	Hearing impairment (children)	-	-	120 #2
Outdoors in parkland and conservations areas	Disruption of tranquillity	#3		

#1: As low as possible.



- #2: Peak sound pressure (not LAF, max) measured 100 mm from the ear.
- #3: Existing quiet outdoor areas should be preserved and the ratio of intruding noise to natural background sound should be kept low.
- #4: Under headphones, adapted to free-field values.

## 5. Noise Management

Chapter 5 is devoted to noise management with discussions on: strategies and priorities in managing indoor noise levels; noise policies and legislation; the impact of environmental noise; and on the enforcement of regulatory standards.

The fundamental goals of noise management are to develop criteria for deriving safe noise exposure levels and to promote noise assessment and control as part of environmental health programmes. These basic goals should guide both international and national policies for noise management. The United Nation's Agenda 21 supports a number of environmental management principles on which government policies, including noise management policies, can be based: the principle of precaution; the "polluter pays" principle; and noise prevention. In all cases, noise should be reduced to the lowest level achievable in the particular situation. When there is a reasonable possibility that the public health will be endangered, even though scientific proof may be lacking, action should be taken to protect the public health, without awaiting the full scientific proof. The full costs associated with noise pollution (including monitoring, management, lowering levels and supervision) should be met by those responsible for the source of noise. Action should be taken where possible to reduce noise at the source.

A legal framework is needed to provide a context for noise management. National noise standards can usually be based on a consideration of international guidelines, such as these *Guidelines for Community Noise*, as well as national criteria documents, which consider dose-response relationships for the effects of noise on human health. National standards take into account the technological, social, economic and political factors within the country. A staged program of noise abatement should also be implemented to achieve the optimum health protection levels over the long term.

Other components of a noise management plan include: noise level monitoring; noise exposure mapping; exposure modeling; noise control approaches (such as mitigation and precautionary measures); and evaluation of control options. Many of the problems associated with high noise levels can be prevented at low cost, if governments develop and implement an integrated strategy for the indoor environment, in concert with all social and economic partners. Governments should establish a "National Plan for a Sustainable Noise Indoor Environment" that applies both to new construction as well as to existing buildings.

The actual priorities in rational noise management will differ for each country. Priority setting in noise management refers to prioritizing the health risks to be avoided and concentrating on the most important sources of noise. Different countries have adopted a range of approaches to noise control, using different policies and regulations. A number of these are outlined in chapter 5 and Appendix 2, as examples. It is evident that noise emission standards have proven insufficient and that the trends in noise pollution are unsustainable.

The concept of environmental an environmental noise impact analysis is central to the philosophy of managing environmental noise. Such an analysis should be required before implementing any project that would significantly increase the level of environmental noise in a community (typically, greater than a 5 dB increase). The analysis should include: a baseline description of the existing noise environment; the

expected level of noise from the new source; an assessment of the adverse health effects; an estimation of the population at risk; the calculation of exposure-response relationships; an assessment of risks and their acceptability; and a cost-benefit analysis.

Noise management should:

1. Start monitoring human exposures to noise.
2. Have health control require mitigation of noise immissions, and not just of noise source emissions. The following should be taken into consideration:
  - specific environments such as schools, playgrounds, homes, hospitals.
  - environments with multiple noise sources, or which may amplify the effects of noise.
  - sensitive time periods such as evenings, nights and holidays.
  - groups at high risk, such as children and the hearing impaired.
3. Consider the noise consequences when planning transport systems and land use.
4. Introduce surveillance systems for noise-related adverse health effects.
5. Assess the effectiveness of noise policies in reducing adverse health effects and exposure, and in improving supportive "soundscapes".
6. Adopt these *Guidelines for Community Noise* as intermediary targets for improving human health.
7. Adopt precautionary actions for a sustainable development of the acoustical environments.

## Conclusions and recommendations

In chapter 6 are discussed: the implementation of the guidelines; further WHO work on noise; and research needs are recommended.

*Implementation.* For implementation of the guidelines it is recommended that:

- Governments should protect the population from community noise and consider it an integral part of their policy of environmental protection.
- Governments should consider implementing action plans with short-term, medium-term and long-term objectives for reducing noise levels.
- Governments should adopt the *Health Guidelines for Community Noise* values as targets to be achieved in the long-term.
- Governments should include noise as an important public health issue in environmental impact assessments.
- Legislation should be put in place to allow for the reduction of sound levels.
- Existing legislation should be enforced.
- Municipalities should develop low noise implementation plans.
- Cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analyses should be considered potential instruments for meaningful management decisions.
- Governments should support more policy-relevant research.

*Future Work.* The Expert Task Force worked out several suggestions for future work for the WHO in the field of community noise. WHO should:

- Provide leadership and technical direction in defining future noise research priorities.
- Organize workshops on how to apply the guidelines.

- Provide leadership and coordinate international efforts to develop techniques for designing supportive sound environments (e.g. "soundscapes").
- Provide leadership for programs to assess the effectiveness of health-related noise policies and regulations.
- Provide leadership and technical direction for the development of sound methodologies for environmental and health impact plans.
- Encourage further investigation into using noise exposure as an indicator of environmental deterioration (e.g. black spots in cities).
- Provide leadership and technical support, and advise developing countries to facilitate development of noise policies and noise management.

*Research and Development.* A major step forward in raising the awareness of both the public and of decision makers is the recommendation to concentrate more research and development on variables which have monetary consequences. This means that research should consider not only dose-response relationships between sound levels, but also politically relevant variables, such as noise-induced social handicap; reduced productivity; decreased performance in learning; workplace and school absenteeism; increased drug use; and accidents.

In Appendices 1–6 are given: bibliographic references; examples of regional noise situations (African Region, American Region, Eastern Mediterranean Region, South East Asian Region, Western Pacific Region); a glossary; a list of acronyms; and a list of participants.

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## Introduction

Community noise (also called environmental noise, residential noise or domestic noise) is defined as noise emitted from all sources, except noise at the industrial workplace. Main sources of community noise include road, rail and air traffic, industries, construction and public work, and the neighbourhood. Typical neighbourhood noise comes from premises and installations related to the catering trade (restaurant, cafeterias, discotheques, etc.); from live or recorded music; from sporting events including motor sports; from playgrounds and car parks; and from domestic animals such as barking dogs.

The main indoor sources are ventilation systems, office machines, home appliances and neighbours. Although many countries have regulations on community noise from road, rail and air traffic, and from construction and industrial plants, few have regulations on neighbourhood noise. This is probably due to the lack of methods to define and measure it, and to the difficulty of controlling it. In developed countries, too, monitoring of compliance with, and enforcement of, noise regulations are weak for lower levels of urban noise that correspond to occupationally controlled levels ( $>85$  dB LAeq,8h; Frank 1998). Recommended guideline values based on the health effects of noise, other than occupationally-induced effects, are often not taken into account.

The extent of the community noise problem is large. In the European Union about 40% of the population is exposed to road traffic noise with an equivalent sound pressure level exceeding 55 dBA daytime; and 20% is exposed to levels exceeding 65 dBA (Lambert & Vallet 19 1994). When all transportation noise is considered, about half of all European Union citizens live in zones that do not ensure acoustical comfort to residents.

At night, it is estimated that more than 30% is exposed to equivalent sound pressure levels exceeding 55 dBA, which are disturbing to sleep. The noise pollution problem is also severe in the cities of developing countries and is caused mainly by traffic. Data collected alongside densely traveled roads were found to have equivalent sound pressure levels for 24 hours of 75–80 dBA (e.g. National Environment Board Thailand 19 1990; Mage & Walsh 19 1998).

- (a) In contrast to many other environmental problems, noise pollution continues to grow, accompanied by an increasing number of complaints from affected individuals. Most people are typically exposed to several noise sources, with road traffic noise being a dominant source (OECD-ECMT 19 1995). Population growth, urbanization and to a large extent technological development are the main driving forces, and future enlargements of highway systems, international airports and railway systems will only increase the noise problem. Viewed globally, the growth in urban environmental noise pollution is unsustainable, because it involves not simply the direct and cumulative adverse effects on health. It also adversely affects future generations by degrading residential, social and learning environments, with corresponding economical losses (Berglund 1998). Thus, noise is not simply a local problem, but a global issue that affects everyone (Lang 1999; Sandberg 1999) and calls for precautionary action in any environmental planning situation.

The objective of the World Health Organization (WHO) is the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health. As the first principle of the WHO Constitution the definition of 'health' is given as: "A state of complete physical, mental and social well-

being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". This broad definition of health embraces the concept of well-being and, thereby, renders noise impacts such as population annoyance, interference with communication, and impaired task performance as 'health' issues. In 1992, a WHO Task Force also identified the following specific health effects for the general population that may result from community noise: interference with communication; annoyance responses; effects on sleep, and on the cardiovascular and psychophysiological systems; effects on performance, productivity, and social behavior; and noise-induced hearing impairment (WHO 1993; Berglund & Lindvall 1995; cf. WHO 1980). Hearing damage is expected to result from both occupational and environmental noise, especially in developing countries, where compliance with noise regulation is known to be weak (Smith 1998).

Noise is likely to continue as a major issue well into the next century, both in developed and in developing countries. Therefore, strategic action is urgently required, including continued noise control at the source and in local areas. Most importantly, joint efforts among countries are necessary at a system level, in regard to the access and use of land, airspace and seaways, and in regard to the various modes of transportation. Certainly, mankind would benefit from societal reorganization towards healthy transport. To understand noise we must understand the different types of noise and how we measure it, where noise comes from and the effects of noise on human beings. Furthermore, noise mitigation, including noise management, has to be actively introduced and in each case the policy implications have to be evaluated for efficiency.

This document is organized as follows. In Chapter 2 noise sources and measurement are discussed, including the basic aspects of source characteristics, sound propagation and transmission. In Chapter 3 the adverse health effects of noise are characterized. These include noise-induced hearing impairment, interference with speech communication, sleep disturbance, cardiovascular and physiological effects, mental health effects, performance effects, and annoyance reactions. This chapter is rounded out by a consideration of combined noise sources and their effects, and a discussion of vulnerable groups. In Chapter 4 the Guideline values are presented. Chapter 5 is devoted to noise management. Included are discussions of: strategies and priorities in the management of indoor noise levels; noise policies and legislation; environmental noise impact; and enforcement of regulatory standards. In Chapter 6 implementation of the WHO Guidelines is discussed, as well as future WHO work on noise and its research needs. In Appendices 1-6 are given: bibliographic references; examples of regional noise situations (African Region, American Region, Eastern Mediterranean Region, South East Asian Region, Western Pacific Region); a glossary; a list of acronyms; and a list of participants.