

Air Conditioning Equipment Noise

ENVIRONMENTAL NUISANCE

Noise Nuisance Factsheet – Air Conditioner Equipment Noise

Noise from air-conditioners can disturb neighbours, disrupt their sleep and interfere with their normal daily activities (listening to the TV, talking on the telephone). If loud enough, it can impact on people's health. This fact sheet includes information that may assist residents to reduce noise emissions and meet legal requirements.

Be a Good Neighbour

Take the time to talk to neighbours and ask them for suggestions about solving any problems. Discuss noise concerns with neighbours before installing equipment that emits noise. In many cases an agreement can be reached that satisfies everyone's needs.

The Law

The *Environmental Protection Act 1994* introduced by the State Government include noise limits for air-conditioners. Council is legally required to enforce these limits when the noise is emitted from residential premises. If issues between neighbours cannot be resolved and further complaints are made, Council will have to investigate. If an air-conditioner exceeds noise limits, Council may issue the owner or operator with an on-the-spot fine.

Allowable Noise Limits

If noise from an air-conditioner exceeds the following levels when measured at a neighbour's house, the owner or operator may be issued with an on-the-spot fine.

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| 7:00am to 10:00pm – No more than 5dB(A) above background noise |
| 10:00pm to 7:00am – No more than 3dB(A) above background noise |

The table below is a practical guide to different decibel levels:

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| Quiet room in the house 20-30 dB(A) |
| Daytime in a quiet residential street 35-45 dB(A) |
| Large busy office 50-60 dB(A) |

Ways You Can Reduce Noise

A range of measures can be used to reduce the noise impact of an air-conditioner. These include:

1) Limiting Hours of Operation

Talk to neighbours to find out if there are particular times when the air-conditioner disturbs them.

2) Selecting a Quieter Air-Conditioner

Older air-conditioners can be particularly noisy. Replacing an air-conditioner with a quieter model may help solve the problem.

3) Location

Locate the air-conditioner as far away as possible from neighbours and away from sensitive areas (e.g. bedroom windows). Avoid placing the air-conditioner near a noise reflective surface (e.g. multiple walls, corners) and use existing features to hide the air-conditioner from view, as this will often reduce its noise impact.

4) Maintenance

Lack of maintenance can cause higher noise levels and reduce the effectiveness of air-conditioners. Contact the manufacturer or installer for advice.

5) Fences or Barriers

A solid fence that hides the air-conditioner from view may also help to reduce noise levels. If neighbours can see the air-conditioner or if the fence has any gaps, this won't be as effective.

6) Acoustic Enclosures

Enclosing the unit (e.g. in a wooden box with an absorbent lining) can be very effective, although it is important that the unit has adequate ventilation. This can usually be achieved by getting advice from the manufacturer or installer.

7) Modifications to the fan or compressor unit

Sometimes modifications can be made to the unit to reduce noise. For example, a noise-absorbent sock can be fitted to some compressors. Discuss this option with the manufacturer or installer.

For further information on this topic, please contact Gladstone Regional Council's - Environmental Health Section on (07) 4976 6996.