

Construction noise

Updated September 2023

EPA 425/23: This information sheet offers advice on dealing with excessive noise from building sites.

What is construction noise?

Construction noise is noise that arises from an activity at a construction site and includes:

- demolition work, site preparation work and building maintenance or repair work
- the operation of vehicles within, entering or leaving a construction site
- any activities at, or within the immediate vicinity of a construction site, of persons who perform work at the site, or activity connected with work at the site.

Construction noise restrictions only apply to activities on a site that requires development authorisation under the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016* (PDI Act) in respect of any of the activities undertaken at the site. Construction noise is not the use of machinery for minor maintenance, or other activities on domestic or commercial or industrial premises which is not authorised under the PDI Act as these activities are regulated under other sections of the *Local Nuisance and Litter Control Act 2016* (LNLC Act) and the [Environment Protection \(Commercial and Industrial Noise\) Policy 2023 \(Noise Policy\)](#).

Introduction

Construction activities are inherently noisy and temporary in nature and the general noise provisions under the Noise Policy are not a suitable tool to manage this activity. While some construction noise may be unavoidable, it can often be controlled using improved work practices. The responsible person, who is the owner, occupier or contractor, must take all reasonable and practicable measures to minimise noise resulting from the activity and to reduce its impact.

Who deals with construction noise

In most cases the responsible authority for managing construction is your local council under the LNLC Act. There are situations when other authorities would manage construction noise which is expanded upon within this section. The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) is responsible for managing construction noise at sites where an authorisation to conduct an activity of environmental significance applies.

The [EPA webpage](#) provides a search function to determine if the subject site has an environmental authorisation. This information sheet will provide further information regarding construction noise requirements.

Public infrastructure works (construction, maintenance and repair) can occur outside of the times specified within this information sheet when it is reasonably required. Public infrastructure includes roads, railways, electrical or water infrastructure, etc.

The Department of Infrastructure and Transport (DIT) has a [Guideline for the Management of Noise and Vibration: Construction and Maintenance Activities](#). This guideline is to be referenced for construction noise in relation to public infrastructure.

When it is possible to do so, public authorities or contractors should provide advance notice of works to people who may be adversely affected by public infrastructure works occurring outside of normal construction hours.

General procedures for sites with environmental authorisation

Restricted hours of operation

Construction noise that causes an adverse impact on amenity is only permitted between 7 am and 7 pm, Monday to Saturday.

For construction activities, an adverse impact on amenity is defined as an average noise of 45dB(A) or any singular noise event with a maximum noise level of 60dB(A) at a noise receiver (such as a domestic premise). In practical terms this means that normal construction activity (such as the use of power tools, machinery, hammering and sawing) is only permitted between the hours of 7 am and 7 pm, Monday to Saturday where residential premises are nearby.

Construction activity that does not have an adverse impact on amenity is not restricted by the identified times. At sites that hold an EPA authorisation, construction activity is not permitted to occur outside of these hours or on a Sunday or public holiday without written permission from the EPA or another agency such as a council that administers the *Environment Protection Act 1993* (EP Act).

An application for an activity to occur outside of normal construction hours will only be granted under exceptional circumstances which may include causing an unreasonable interruption to metropolitan services, technical construction requirements, or safety reasons. Examples include the installation or removal of cranes or scaffolding, large concrete pours (such as a commercial building scale project) or other unusual circumstances.

These restrictions are intended to balance the needs of the construction industry while allowing residents to enjoy the amenity of their properties. These restrictions are not intended to restrict quiet construction activities such as painting. Quiet activities can occur without restriction but the permissible noise levels are intentionally set very low and if there is any doubt then these activities should not occur outside of the hours of 7 am and 7 pm, Monday to Saturday.

Information that is required by the EPA to assess an application for out-of-hours construction activity includes:

- Dates that construction will commence and finish.
- Daily times that work will commence and finish.
- Name and contact details of a representative for the company (in the event there are any EPA queries relevant to the application).
- A detailed explanation of the exceptional circumstances and justification as to why it is essential the nominated construction activities should occur outside of permitted times.
- Location of activities (address and landmarks if applicable).
- Noise management plan demonstrating how noise will be kept to a minimum during the construction activity.
- Type of construction work (eg demolition, concrete pour, etc).
- Type of noise that may be experienced (eg power tools, cranes, vehicles, etc).
- Distance between proposed activity and nearest potentially affected premises.
- The number of residents that may be impacted by the proposed activity.

- A copy of the letter that will be provided to premises/residents who are likely to be affected (which must include a contact number of a company representative for residents to call regarding their concerns or complaints).

The EP Act requires that all reasonable and practicable measures are taken by building companies and contractors to minimise noise at all times. Recommendations within [AS 2436–2010: Guide to noise and vibration control on construction, demolition and maintenance sites](#) can be applied to reduce noise impacts on surrounding receivers.

Construction noise with an adverse impact on amenity occurs if the measurements taken in relation to the noise source and the noise affected premises show:

- the source noise level (continuous) exceeds 45 dB(A), or
- the source noise level (maximum) exceeds 60 dB(A).

See Part 3 of the [Noise Policy](#) for the measurement procedure.

What can be done about construction noise

If you are being affected by construction noise, you can try contacting the responsible person in a friendly manner. They may not realise the effect the noise is having on nearby residents. Subject to the noise type, often the builder or site workers can immediately reduce the noise. That is, they can speak more quietly, turn down radios, use quieter equipment or move machinery away from the affected house.

Before approaching site workers or the builder, think about balancing the needs of the owner and the builder. If noisy work is occurring after hours and site workers are not willing to compromise, and you cannot wait to contact the building company during normal office hours, then contact the police on 131 444 while the noise is occurring. The police can make an assessment and if appropriate, take action under the EP Act. You can also lodge a complaint with the EPA on (08) 8204 2004 or through its [website](#).

What can the responsible person do about construction noise

The responsible person should not undertake any activity with an adverse impact on amenity outside of the restricted times described earlier.

Where noise may unreasonably impact on neighbours, the responsible person should notify neighbours well before the construction is due to commence and advise neighbours about the start date, duration, type of construction and provide a contact telephone number for any complaints.

All reasonable and practicable measures must be taken to minimise noise resulting from the activity and to minimise its impact:

- radios which can be heard off site should not be used before 7 am, and be no louder than necessary
- commencing any particularly noisy part of the activity after 9 am, such as use of masonry saws or jackhammers
- builders should take care when dropping materials from a height, for example, into or out of a truck, or when loading or unloading scaffolding
- locating noisy equipment (such as cement mixers and masonry saws) so that their impact on neighbouring premises is minimised (whether by maximising the distance to the neighbouring premises, using structures or elevations to create sound barriers)
- shutting or throttling down equipment (such as backhoes, cranes, bobcats, loaders and generators) whenever they are not in actual use
- ensuring that noise reduction devices such as mufflers are fitted and operating effectively
- adopting off-site or other alternative processes that eliminate or lessen resulting noise
- ensuring that equipment is not operated if maintenance or repairs would eliminate or significantly reduce noise.

Concrete pours

Concrete pours, which generate noise with an adverse impact on amenity, are subject to the same restricted hours of operation as other types of construction activities. However, due to the effect of temperature on the structural integrity of concrete, it is acknowledged that on some occasions it may be desirable to commence concreting activities outside of the restricted times.

In these instances, builders should:

- seek formal approval from the relevant authority to undertake work outside of the restricted hours (see previous advice for the relevant authority)
- take additional steps to inform neighbours of their activities and ensure all reasonable and practicable measures are taken to minimise noise (as above) including:
 - complete all shuttering and other site preparations before 7 pm the previous day unless it can be done in a way that does not create off-site noise.

In assessing whether the relevant authority will approve this activity, consideration will be given to factors such as forecast high temperatures and the extent to which the builder has communicated with residents likely to be affected by this noise.

Further information

Legislation

[Online legislation](#) is freely available.

General information

Environment Protection Authority
GPO Box 2607
Adelaide SA 5001

Telephone: (08) 8204 2004
Facsimile: (08) 8124 4670
Freecall: 1800 623 445 (country)
Website: <https://www.epa.sa.gov.au>
Email: epainfo@sa.gov.au
