

SDCI's Noise Abatement Program

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I get a permit/variance to have a party at my home/business?

No, SDCI cannot issue a Noise Variance for a public or residential disturbance (SMC 25.08.500 and 25.08.505).

However, you may obtain a Temporary Noise Variance for a permitted Special Event, held on public property. If the event has amplified sound during the defined quiet hours of the neighborhood, you need to apply for a Temporary Noise Variance.

What hours am I allowed to do construction and maintenance?

Construction times allowed by the Seattle Noise Ordinance are:

- 7:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m., weekdays
- 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m., weekends and legal holidays*

Lowrise, Midrise, Highrise, Residential-Commercial, and Neighborhood Commercial zones:

- 7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m., weekdays
- 9:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m., weekends and legal holidays*

Parking lot maintenance or equipment used for a public project in Lowrise, Midrise, Highrise, Residential-Commercial, and Neighborhood Commercial zones:

- 7:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m., weekdays
- 9:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m., weekends and legal holidays*

Impact construction (pile driving, jackhammers, hoe ram, etc.) can occur during the following hours:

- 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., weekdays
- 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., weekends and legal holidays*

Some construction projects may have MUP or SEPA noise conditions. If you have a concern about construction noise, mechanical equipment noise, or a commercial facility in the Seattle city limits, you may file a complaint with SDCI by contacting Code Compliance or discussing it with one of our Noise Abatement Coordinators.

*Legal holidays are New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Day after Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day.

What can I do about low flying airplanes and hovering helicopters?

The FAA regulates low flying aircraft like the Blue Angels and noise from any helicopters, medivac or joy riders. For more information please contact the:

- FAA flight standards Seattle office at (425) 227-1813
- Sea-Tac International Airport: (206) 433-5393
- King County International Airport (Boeing Field): (206) 205-5242

What can I do about loud motorcycle exhaust?

This section of the code is enforced by the Seattle Police Department. Please contact the police non-emergency number (206) 625-5011.

What can I do about loud stereos or boom cars?

This section of the code is enforced by the Seattle Police Department. Please contact the police non-emergency number (206) 625-5011.

What can I do about noise from garbage and recycling trucks?

Commercial garbage trucks are not allowed to collect in residential zones or any property adjacent to residential zoned property before 7:00 a.m. or after 10:00p.m.

This section of the code is enforced by the Seattle Public Utilities. Please contact Solid Waste Compliance at (206) 684-3000.

What can I do about noise from a nightclub?

Night club noise is addressed in SDCI Director's Rule 12-2011 and 25.08.501 of the Seattle Noise Ordinance. This section of the code is enforced by the Seattle Finance and Administrative Services. Please contact Joanna Kham at (206) 684-8408.

What is a Seattle Noise Ordinance defined legal holiday?

Legal holidays that are referenced in the 25.08.155 of the Seattle Noise Ordinance are: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and the day after, and Christmas.

Mechanical FAQ

What can I do if my mechanical equipment is too loud?

The solution depends on the particular circumstance. Some situations may require a detailed assessment by a professional acoustical consultant. Others may be as simple as relocating the equipment or providing a sound barrier. See the AHRI website and use the AHRI Standard 275.

What can I do if my air conditioner is too loud?

The most common problem is the air conditioner units being installed too close to the property line or in between houses on small lots. Mini split air conditioning units are permitted in side yards without a noise review.

Some solutions may include:

- Install a quieter unit
- Moving the unit from between houses

- Design and install an effective noise barrier
- Install a compressor “quiet pack” along with quieter fan blades
- Prevent the unit from running at night (Conditional use agreement to be filed with SDCI)

What can I do if my heat pump is too loud?

Heat pumps are a year-round appliance that can run any time day or night. Most of the equipment that is currently available will not meet the night time Noise Ordinance limits when located in a "minimum" side yard. (45 dBA or below at the property line). Mini split heat pumps in side yards are permitted without a noise review.

Potential solutions may include:

- Install a quieter unit
- Move the unit from between houses
- Design and install an effective noise barrier
- Install a compressor “quiet pack” along with quieter fan blades

What can I do if my furnace or boiler venting (power venting) is too loud?

This type of appliance vent when terminated between the houses' minimum side yards can generate noise complaints. Vent noise from high-efficiency furnaces and boilers can be reduced by focusing the output away from neighboring property. Pointing the discharge down can reduce the sound by 6 dB. Other solutions include moving the termination point to the front yard, back yard or above the roofline.

Exhaust fans

If addressed in the design phase, noise issues from exhaust fans can usually be easily mitigated. One potential solution is to utilize a larger fan running at a lower RPM to generate the engineered CFM and static pressure.

What is a noise barrier?

A noise barrier is a structure that blocks sound from a fixed source. The barrier should consist of material that has a minimum mass weight of 4 pounds per square foot not including the supporting frame. It must be continuous without breaks and extend all the way to the ground or the base supporting the unit. Some barriers include an absorptive material on the side facing the noise generator to reduce or eliminate noise reflected to the neighbor.

A professional acoustic consultant can provide a detailed assessment of the situation and show compliance or design proper mitigation of excessive noise levels if necessary.

Where are sound measurements taken?

Mechanical equipment is measured at the complainant's property line. Construction and maintenance equipment are measured at the receiver's property line or 50 feet whichever is greater (during permitted hours).

What is a noise compliance report?

A noise compliance report is included in a mechanical permit application and submitted to SDCI for review. All exterior mechanical equipment and associated

venting on commercial property needs to be evaluated for compliance with the Seattle noise ordinance.

The noise compliance report must include the sound rating information from the equipment manufacturer. It must have a site plan showing the location of the equipment and distance to all adjacent property lines and their zoning.

If the noise from the equipment exceeds the noise ordinance, detailed mitigation measures used to reduce the noise levels must be included. The noise levels being generated by the mechanical equipment must meet the objective noise standards for the City of Seattle at all the adjacent property lines.