

How to Fight Noise:

A GUIDE TO REDUCING COMMUNITY NOISE POLLUTION

Noise Free America
A Coalition to Promote Quiet



Noise Free America: A Coalition to Promote Quiet

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Chapter 1 — The Noise Problem

Americans are bombarded by unwanted sound every day, from boom cars, loud motorcycles, leaf blowers, barking dogs, piped-in music, noisy neighbors, and car alarms. Noise is intrusive and harmful. Dr. William H. Stewart, former U.S. Surgeon General, stated, “Calling noise a nuisance is like calling smog an inconvenience. Noise must be considered a hazard to the health of people everywhere.”¹

THE NOISE CONTROL ACT OF 1972

The Noise Control Act of 1972 (42 U.S.C. 4901 to 4918) was the first federal law to regulate noise pollution. It acknowledged the harms of noise and established the Office of Noise Abatement and Control (ONAC) within the Environmental Protection Agency. In 1981, ONAC was de-funded by the Reagan administration and has not been reestablished. Committed to deregulating the economy, President Reagan stripped ONAC’s funding at the behest of industries affected by ONAC’s noise regulations. He maintained that noise pollution could be addressed by states and localities.² Reestablishing ONAC is Noise Free America’s top priority.

The Noise Control Act of 1972 is still in effect, but it

is not being enforced. Local police departments are the key to enforcement.

The preamble for the Noise Control Act of 1972 states:

“(a) The Congress finds--

- 1) that inadequately controlled noise presents a growing danger to the health and welfare of the Nation’s population, particularly in urban areas;
- 2) that the major sources of noise include transportation vehicles and equipment, machinery, appliances, and other products in commerce; and
- 3) that, while primary responsibility for control of noise rests with State and local governments, Federal action is essential to deal with major noise sources in commerce, control of which require national uniformity of treatment.

(b) The Congress declares that it is the policy of the United States to promote an environment for all Americans free from noise that jeopardizes their health or welfare. To that end, it is the purpose of this Act to establish a means for effective coordination of Federal research and activities



SOURCES OF NOISE

Noise can come from many sources, including:

airplanes	ambulances	ATVs	backup beepers
barking dogs	car alarms	construction sites	diesel trucks
farm equipment	fire sirens	firearms	fireworks
freeway traffic	garbage trucks	helicopters	jackhammers
jake brakes	jet skis	lawn mowers	leaf blowers
loud car exhausts	loud car stereos	motorcycles	neighbors
piped-in music	police sirens	snowmobiles	train horns

in noise control, to authorize the establishment of Federal noise emission standards for products distributed in commerce, and to provide information to the public respecting the noise emission and noise reduction characteristics of such products.”

Facts About Noise

Loud sound is dangerous even when it is not painful. The human ear will feel pain at 120-140 decibels. Prolonged exposure to noise above 85 decibels can cause permanent hearing loss. While hearing aids improve some aspects of hearing loss, they also amplify distortions and can make the problem worse.

Household noises such as gardening tools, power

tools, loud toys, and stereos may cause hearing damage. Many children’s toys (for example, rattles, musical instruments, and squeaky toys) have been measured at 140 decibels and above. Gas-powered lawn mowers and leaf blowers are as loud as 130 decibels. Personal stereo systems can be 110 decibels.³ It is important to limit the frequency and use of loud appliances in your home.

A Census Bureau report indicates that noise is Americans’ number one complaint about their neighborhoods and the most significant reason why they wish to move.⁴ By far, the most common complaint to New York City’s 311 Customer Service Center is noise. Noise complaints to the City’s 311 call center jumped from 200,018 in 2010 to 384,118 in 2015, totaling 1.6 million noise complaints during those six-years.⁵



Aircraft noise is also a problem. causing stress, sleep loss, and hypertension. It also disturbs work and worsens academic performance. Home values decline due to noisy locations.

In 1994, the Federal Aviation Administration commissioned a study of the effects of aircraft noise on housing prices and found that on average house value increases 1.33 percent per decibel of additional quiet.⁶

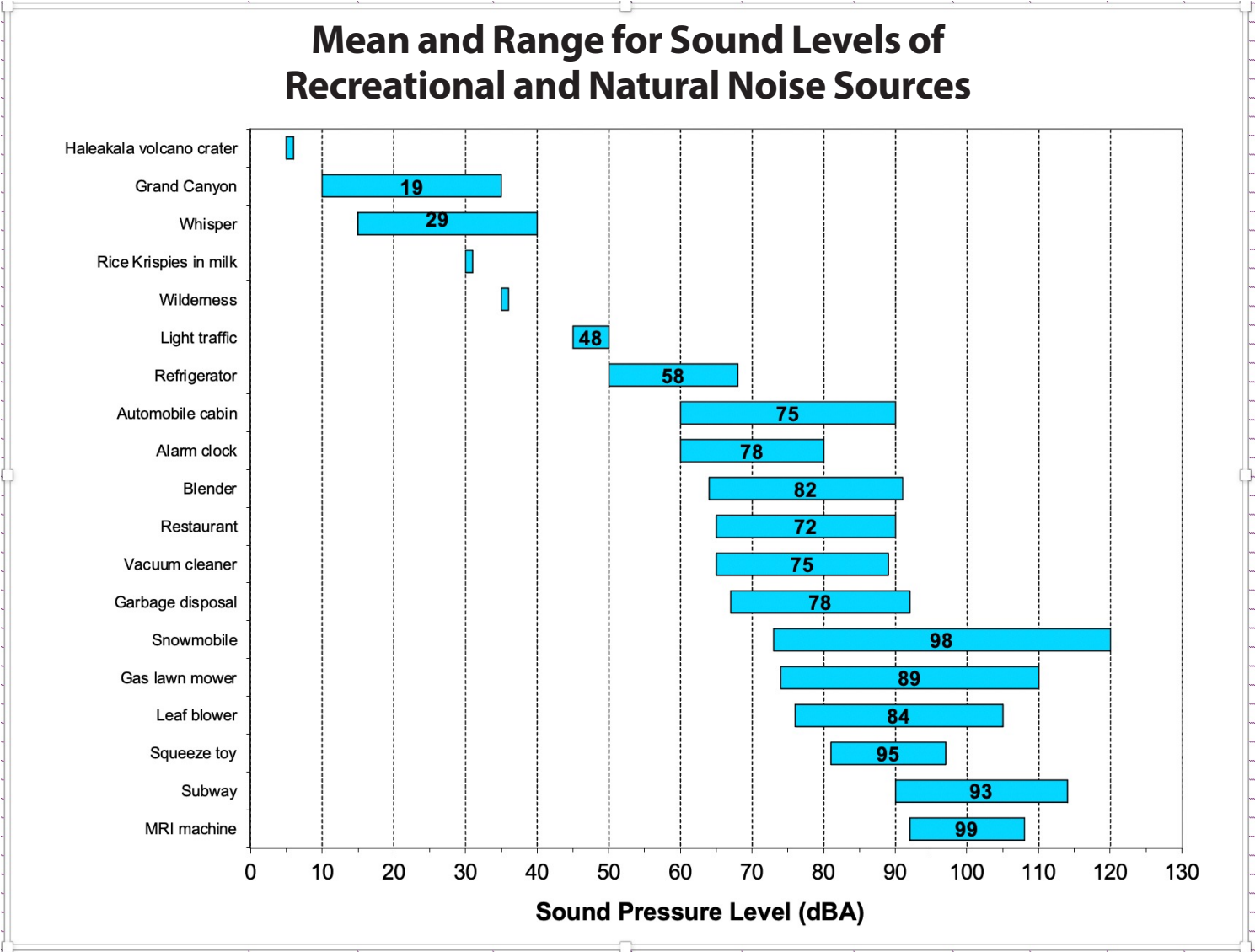
In October 2021, the American Heart Association journal *Hypertension* published the results of a study by Polish researchers on the effects of aircraft noise. They concluded that “long-term aircraft noise exposure may increase the prevalence of hypertension and accelerate arterial stiffening. However, even short-term noise reduction, as

experienced during the COVID-19 lockdown, may reverse those unfavorable effects.”⁷

UNDERSTANDING DECIBELS

Noise is measured in how much pressure is created by a sound wave in units called decibels (dB). The range of decibels is from 0 to around 175 dB. One hundred forty decibels will immediately cause damage to the ear. The scale is measured logarithmically; the sound doubles every ten decibels.

In her book [*Of Sound Mind: How Our Brain Constructs a Meaningful Sonic World*](#), neuroscientist [*Nina Kraus*](#), a professor of communication at Northwestern University, says that even “low-level” noise may be unhealthy because ambient noises around us can put us in a “constant state of alarm.” Noise is more than just a “nuisance.”




*The bars above indicate the range for sound levels of various recreational and natural sounds.
The numbers within the bars are the mean levels for each of these sounds.*

Source: 3M Personal Safety Division E•A•RCAL Laboratory’s Noise Navigator™ Sound Level Database.⁸

Permissible Noise Exposures

OSHA Regulations—The Occupational Safety and Health Association (OSHA) administers regulations for safety in the working environment. Below is a table outlining OSHA's standards for occupational noise exposure.

Comparison of Duration Per Day in Hours to Allowable Sound Level in dBA (Slow-Response SPL)

Duration per day (hours)	Sound level (dBA, slow response)	PEL = 90 dBA (TWA), or 100% Dose 
8	90	
6	92	
4	95	
2	100	
1	105	
1/2	110	
0.25	115	

- **PEL:** The permissible exposure limit (PEL) for noise is **90 dBA**, as an eight hour time-weighted average (TWA). The PEL is also referred to as a 100 percent "dose" noise.

Source: OSHA Safety and Health Topics, Occupational Noise Exposure, "Permissible Noise Exposures." <https://www.osha.gov/noise/standards>.

Effects of Noise

AUDITORY HEALTH EFFECTS

Noise-induced hearing loss usually occurs over a lengthy period. By the time it is evident, it may be too late. Early warning signs include a ringing or buzzing in the ear (tinnitus) and muffled hearing. Noise is one of the main causes of the hearing loss suffered by 30 million Americans.⁹

Tinnitus is caused by damage of the hair cells in the inner ear after noise damage. Acoustic trauma is caused by a short blast of loud noise that can induce short-term hearing loss and or which ringing in the ears.

Temporary threshold shift (TTS) is temporary hearing loss that a person suffers after exposure to loud noise. After a few hours in a quiet place, hearing will return.

Permanent threshold shift (PTS) is permanent hearing loss that develops after months or years of continual noise damage. The damage builds up until it affects the everyday life of the individual. It does not go away after spending time in a quiet place; it is irreversible.

NON-AUDITORY HEALTH EFFECTS

Noise stresses the body. Non-auditory health effects of noise include chronic fatigue, ischemic heart disease, hypertension, endocrine disruption, cancer/tumorigenesis, cognitive effects, sleep disturbance, low birth weight or premature birth, and obesity.¹⁰ In addition, research indicates noise can increase aggression and affect mental health. Several studies have shown that noise worsens behavioral problems in children. One study documented that loud noise may increase dementia-related emergencies.¹¹

Prolonged exposure to deafening music can be so psychologically devastating that it has been used as a form of “no-touch” torture of prisoners of war. Music torture is permitted under U.S. law and was used by the U.S. military during the war in Iraq in 2003, but it is banned under the United National Convention Against Torture.¹²

Noise is a major reason for chronic fatigue and sleep loss. Intermittent noise is more disruptive to sleep loss than continual noise, and emerging data suggest that “nocturnal environmental noise may be the most worrying form of noise pollution in terms of its health consequences,” according to a survey of research published in the December 2014 issue of [Sleep Science](#).¹³

Noise and Crime

A U.S. Department of Justice report, “[The Problem of Loud Car Stereos](#),” notes that there is a relationship between boom car noise, drugs, and crime.¹⁴ It states that drug dealers often use boom car thumping as a means of announcing their presence in the community.

Effective approaches include enforcing laws that specify noise level violations and using a “plainly audible” standard for car stereos. In New York City and Chicago, police can impound cars as evidence until the citation is adjudicated.

Communities deteriorate when there is excessive noise. The theory of “broken windows,” developed by James O. Wilson and George L. Kelling in 1982, asserts that broken windows are a gateway crime. If broken windows in a neighborhood are not repaired, vandals and criminals start to take over. Soon, there is a downward spiral of crime and public disorder. In 1996, George J. Kelling and Catherine Coles published [Fixing Broken Windows: Restoring Order and Reducing Crime in Our Communities](#).

Similarly, the theory of “broken eardrums” views noise as a gateway crime. Excessive noise leads to community deterioration. If noise problems are not addressed, the level of crime is likely to increase. Also, noise violators are practically advertising the fact that they pursue lawlessness; therefore, police should target noise violators as a means of apprehending criminals.



Chapter 2 — Noise Free America: A Coalition to Promote Quiet

In the spring of 2001, Ted Rueter founded Noise Free America: A Coalition to Promote Quiet in reaction to the excessive noise while he was teaching at UCLA and living in Los Angeles. For Ted, Los Angeles was the noisiest city he had ever been to and UCLA was the noisiest campus he had been to. Since then, Noise Free America has grown significantly, with more than fifty local chapters in more than twenty-five states. In addition, Noise Free America has attracted extensive media attention.

Activities and Impact

Noise Free America: A Coalition to Promote Quiet educates the public about noise pollution. Every month, Noise Free America issues a “[Noisy Dozen Award](#)” that is given to a noisy community, company, industry, or person. These [press releases](#) have generated a great deal of publicity, which puts additional pressure on local officials and the police to act.

Noise Free America has been mentioned in around 500 news stories, including front-page newspaper articles in Lincoln, Nebraska (The Lincoln Star); Savannah, Georgia (The Savannah Morning News); Richmond, Virginia (The Richmond Times-Dispatch); and Madison, Wisconsin (The Capital Times).

In 2004, a feature-length article appeared in *Time* magazine, “[Just Too Loud](#),”¹⁵ which mentioned Noise Free America. A 2005 story on ABC-TV’s “20/20,” titled “[Pumping Up the Car Volume](#),”¹⁶ featured Ted Rueter discussing boom cars.

In addition, Noise Free America: A Coalition to Promote Quiet has:

- Helped thousands of noise victims, through our “[Ask an Expert](#)” service.
- Conducted five advocacy trips to Washington, D.C., seeking renewed funding for the Office of Noise Abatement and Control.
- Distributed “[The American Noise Pollution Epidemic](#),” a position paper on restoring the federal Office of Noise Abatement and Control.
- Participated in a federal lawsuit regarding illegal after-market motorcycle equipment.

- Published [Guide to Modified Exhaust Systems](#), a book on illegal motorcycle noise.¹⁷
- Developed two television public service announcements on the importance of peace and quiet:
 - [30-second public service announcement](#)
 - [60-second public service announcement](#)
- Created three 10-second videos on the effects of noise.
- Promoted the “[Elkhart model](#)” for noise enforcement, which features a noise control police officer and stiff fines for noise violations.
- Advised state and local officials on noise policy and enforcement.

Local Chapters

ESTABLISHING A LOCAL CHAPTER

Local chapters are an important part of Noise Free America; they are listed on our [website](#). Many of our local chapters have achieved significant success, such as stepped-up enforcement, noise monitors, and strengthened noise ordinances. Many local chapter members have testified before the city council and met with the mayor and police chief. To start a chapter in your area, contact us at director@noisefree.org

ATTRACTING MEMBERS AND ALLIES

Publicize your local chapter through press releases, media interviews, events, letters to the editor, handbills, flyers, e-mail, and community meetings. (Learn more about these tactics on pages 16–23.)

Agenda

Noise Free America: A Coalition to Promote Quiet has the following agenda.

(A) STATE

Each state of the United States is called upon to declare noise a dangerous form of pollution, a serious threat to health and safety, and a widespread problem

subject to State jurisdiction. All States should adopt a comprehensive Noise Code which would form the general framework for county and local ordinances within the State. Counties and localities would be required to adopt the elements of the Noise Code and would be required to submit any allowable local modifications to the State for approval. No element of the Noise Code could be disallowed by the local jurisdictions. However, any local modification of the Noise Code or separate regulation construed to be more stringent than the State Noise Code would be allowed.

The Noise Code for each State should contain, but not be limited to, the following essential provisions:

1. **Plainly audible standard:** Police and other enforcement officials shall detect excessive noise from motor vehicles, motorcycles, and houses according to the plainly audible standard.
2. **Ten-foot rule:** No motor vehicle or motorcycle shall emit an electronically amplified sound plainly audible beyond ten feet from its source.
3. **No loud pipes:** No motor vehicle or motorcycle shall be equipped with an engine exhaust pipe or muffler not approved under given State noise abatement requirements.
4. **No loud amplifiers:** The installation of electronic amplification equipment capable of generating noise beyond a specified decibel level within a motor vehicle shall be deemed a misdemeanor or better and subject the installer to a prescribed punishment and/or fine.
5. **Punishment for loud pipes:** The installation of unapproved engine exhaust pipes or mufflers on a motor vehicle or motorcycle shall be deemed a gross misdemeanor and subject the installer to a prescribed punishment and/or fine.
6. **No jake brakes:** The use of jake brakes on commercial motor vehicles shall be prohibited. Both the owner and operator of such vehicles shall be subject to a prescribed

punishment and/or fine. Air exhausts on air brakes shall be maintained to factory specifications.

7. **Fines for loud vehicles:** The owner and/or operator of any motor vehicle or motorcycle issuing excessive noise or noises shall be subject to a prescribed punishment and/or fine.
8. **Impoundment of loud cars:** Any motor vehicle or motorcycle issuing excessive noise or noises shall be subject to immediate impoundment either according to mandate or at the discretion of the enforcement officer. In the case of impoundment, the offending equipment shall be confiscated, and the owner and/or operator shall be subject to impoundment fees, equipment removal costs, and a prescribed punishment and/or fine.
9. **No gasoline-powered leaf blowers:** The sale and use of all gasoline-powered leaf blowers shall be prohibited.
10. **Punishment for owners of barking dogs:** The owner of a canine whose bark is heard continually beyond a given property line for a prescribed period of time shall be subject to punishment and/or fine. A third violation will subject the canine to possible impoundment within an animal shelter and the owner of the dog to further punishment and/or fine.
11. **Limitations on power equipment:** The use of outdoor power equipment shall be permitted within time periods described by local or county ordinance.
12. **Time limits on construction and garbage**

collection: Construction activity and garbage collection shall be limited to time periods described by local or county ordinance.

13. **Car alarms prohibited:** The sale and installation of electronic car alarms shall be prohibited. Within two years from passage of the Noise Code, the use of car alarms in a motor vehicle shall be deemed a misdemeanor or better and subject the vehicle to impoundment and the vehicle owner to prescribed punishment



and/or fine. The use of more effective passive anti-theft systems (such as The Club and Lo Jack) shall be recommended and their use encouraged through public service announcements.

14. **Limitations on jet skis:** The maximum exhaust noise issuing from jet skis shall be prescribed by State law. Violators will be subject to a prescribed fine and the offending equipment will be subject to impoundment.
15. **Limitations on ATVs:** The maximum exhaust noise issuing will be subject to a prescribed fine and the offending equipment will be subject to impoundment.
16. **Limitations on dirt bikes:** The maximum exhaust noise issuing from motorized dirt bikes shall be prescribed by State law. Violators will be subject to a prescribed fine and the offending equipment subject to impoundment.
17. **Limitations on snowmobiles:** The maximum exhaust noise issuing from snowmobiles shall be prescribed by law. Violators will be subject to a prescribed fine and the offending equipment subject to impoundment.
18. **No jet skis at public beaches:** Jet skis shall be prohibited from specified public State waters and public State beaches.
19. **No ATVs and dirt bikes on specified lands:** ATVs and motorized dirt bikes shall be prohibited from specified public State lands.
20. **Limitations on motorized watercraft:** Use of motorized watercraft on public waters shall be limited to times prescribed by county and local ordinance.
21. **Zones without motorized watercraft:** A specified percentage of public waters within each State shall be free of all motorized watercraft.
22. **Snowmobile restrictions:** Snowmobiles shall be prohibited from State lands.
23. **Livability Courts:** Livability Courts to deal with everyday quality of life issues should be considered for every locale and/or county (along the model established in Charleston, South Carolina).
24. **No state boom car training:** No school receiving State funding shall offer courses on the installation of prohibited electronic amplification devices in motor vehicles or the installation of motor vehicle exhaust systems which exceed State-mandated noise levels. Nor shall any student receive State funding in order to pursue such a course at any teaching institution, private or public.
25. **Limitations on outdoor amplified speakers:** Outdoor amplified music shall be subject to county



and local regulation based on guidelines prescribed within the State Noise Code.

26. **Anti-noise curriculum:** A broad-based public education anti- noise campaign should be implemented, especially in the public schools.
27. **State anti-noise coordinator:** Each State's governor shall appoint an anti-noise coordinator who will oversee the implementation of the Noise Code, assure compliance by counties and localities, arbitrate the changes and modifications requested by counties and localities, and oversee the selection and training of sworn non-police "noise monitors" who will be granted full powers of enforcement for noise statutes.
28. **All private vehicles:** The State Noise Code shall apply to all registered and unregistered motor vehicles. Exemptions for police, fire, ambulance, and other official and unofficial emergency motor vehicles as well as other special cases shall be considered by the noise czar on a request basis.
29. **Limiting siren noise:** Qualifying locales of a certain population density may submit to the noise coordinator for his approval a plan to limit unnecessary horn and siren blowing by police, fire, and emergency vehicles.
30. **Limitations on outdoor compressor units:** The noise from outdoor cooling fan and compressor units shall not exceed specified decibel levels within a specified distance from the nearest dwelling. Should measured decibel levels be exceeded, the owner of the equipment and/or the owner of the premises in question shall be subject to per diem prescribed fines.
31. **Noise walls:** States should construct noise walls along highways in heavily traveled and densely populated areas.
32. **Adequate funding:** States, counties, and localities shall provide funding and resources necessary for enforcement of these provisions.





(B) FEDERAL

The Federal government is called upon to declare noise a dangerous form of pollution, a serious threat to health and safety, and a public menace. To this end, Noise Free America recommends the following:

1. **Establish a noise agency:** The dormant Office of Noise Abatement and Control within the United States Environmental Protection Agency should be revived with full funding.
2. **Limitations on train horns:** The Federal Railroad Administration should reexamine its regulations regarding the length and duration of train horns at intersections that are equipped with bells, lights, and safety gates.
3. **Limitations on back-up beepers:** The Occupational Safety and Health Administration should reexamine its requirement for back-up beepers on trucks and vans. At the least, it should require back-up beepers of diminished volume.
4. **Federal studies of noise pollution:** The President's Council on Environmental Quality, the United States Surgeon General, and the Centers for Disease Prevention and Control should study and publicize the health and safety hazards of noise pollution.
5. **FTC warning labels:** The Federal Trade Commission should (a) require warning labels on products that are capable of causing hearing damage; (b) mandate a maximum decibel level for all electronically amplified products such as not to exceed "safe and reasonable" use; and (c) ban all toys whose noise levels pose a documented risk to the hearing of children.
6. **Quieting jet aircraft:** The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) should set stricter noise thresholds for existing private and commercial internal combustion engine airplanes and mandate significantly quieter engines for future aircraft of this type.
7. **Noise-silencing technologies:** The FAA should give high priority to the goal of reducing by at least half the current "noise quotient" near existing airports within ten years using noise-sensitive routing protocols and noise cancellation and silencing technologies. Furthermore, substantial cash prizes should be awarded to designers and builders of prototypes of "the world's quietest airplanes" for selected categories of aircraft. The manufacturers

of such aircraft should be granted significant tax benefits and other competitive advantages by Congress.

8. **Limitations on “piped-in” music:** The FAA shall set a maximum-decibel limit for music “piped in” to airport terminals.
9. **Limitations on car stereos:** The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration should impose standards on allowable decibel levels for car stereos.

(C) BUSINESSES

Noise Free America: A Coalition to Promote Quiet calls upon private businesses to voluntarily limit noise from:

1. Piped-in “background” music in retail and wholesale stores, malls, restaurants and workplaces.
2. Loud television or radio sets in stores.
3. Use of the store intercom for advertisements and internal communication.
4. Outside amplified speakers.

5. Deliveries between the hours of 10:00 pm and 7:00 am.
6. Use of leaf blowers.
7. Unnecessary use of back-up beepers.
8. Unnecessary use of in-store buzzers.

(D) AUTOMOBILE MANUFACTURERS

Noise Free America: A Coalition to Promote Quiet calls upon American automobile manufacturers to:

1. Cease offering promotional discounts for car alarms.
2. Cease manufacturing keyless entry systems with loud “chirping” noises.
3. Make production of quieter vehicles a top priority.

(E) BOOM CAR ADVERTISING

Noise Free America calls upon manufacturers and distributors of boom car equipment to cease using violent and sexist imagery in their advertising.



Chapter 3 — Fighting Noise In Your Community

There are many ways to make your voice heard. Always remember that you are not alone. Millions of people feel the same way you do. This chapter offers ideas for promoting a quiet environment, including media techniques, legal strategies, and dealing with noise from neighbors and businesses.

Noisy Neighbors

Do you know your neighbors? Are you on friendly terms? If not, introduce yourself. The best way to live peacefully is to have a positive relationship with those around you.

One excellent approach is to join or form a neighborhood association or watch group. The National Crime Prevention Council offers tips on starting and maintaining a [Neighborhood Watch Program](#).¹⁸ Two other resources are [National Neighborhood Watch](#)¹⁹ and [Nation of Neighbors](#).²⁰

Noise levels in many neighborhoods have risen to extreme levels. Making excessive noise indicates a lack of respect for others and leads to community deterioration.

When a problem arises, act promptly. Try talking with the noisemaker. If the noisemaker is a child, speak with the parent. If the noisemaker is a tenant, speak with the landlord. Do not run to the noisemaker's house in a rage. A confrontational manner would catch your neighbor off guard and create barriers between you. Talk to the person when the noise is not occurring. If you cannot seem to get your message across, get a group of neighbors together who feel the way same way to speak with the offending party.

Another way to spread the word about noise issues is to produce handbills. Distribute them throughout the neighborhood.

Bob Borzotta's book, [Neighbors From Hell](#), discusses the notion of "Love thy Neighbor." His [website](#) offers insight on neighborhood noise problems. There are book excerpts (such as "Neighbors From Hell Syndrome" and "Lifestyle Diversity"), as well as a message board for noise victims. Borzotta offers principles and resources for more peaceful neighborhoods.

BARKING DOGS

One common neighborhood noise problem is barking dogs. Many people do not understand that excessive dog barking is not natural and can be controlled. A well-trained dog will not bark constantly. Talk to the owner of the dog when you are not angry. If the owner does not take care of the problem, call the non-emergency police number (not 911). Write down the phone number and have it on hand. Ask for a police report on the incident. Find an ally in the mayor's office.

There are many ways to control dog barking. Owners should train their dogs through discipline or electronic collars. There are also ways for neighbors to control dog barking, including electronic products which emit a sound directed at the dog each time it barks. [Bark Stop and Bark Stop Pro](#) produce ultrasonic sounds that train dogs to stop barking without harming them. The website [www.barkingdogs.net](#) outlines many additional ideas for dealing with barking dogs.

Clifton, New Jersey has enacted an ordinance against barking dogs. They define a noisy dog as one that barks for more than thirty consecutive minutes, two days in a row. The ordinance went into effect in February 2007. Fines start at \$250 for dog owners.

BOOM CARS

Boom cars are increasingly popular, especially in urban areas. Boom car manufacturers, owners, and websites take pride in being obnoxious. Boom car noise can cause hearing loss and serious health problems. There is widespread public support for restricting boom cars.

When dealing with boom car noise, do not approach the drivers, as this may be dangerous. Call the police right away. There is technology that records boom car noise, available at [Boomcareenforcement.com](#). If you can record the volume and license plate of the car, you can report it on the website. Ask neighbors to also call the police non-emergency number when the disruption occurs. Circulate a petition to give to the police. Often, the police are more likely to listen to a large group of residents.

Filing a Lawsuit

Neighbor Law: Fences, Trees, Boundaries, and Noise

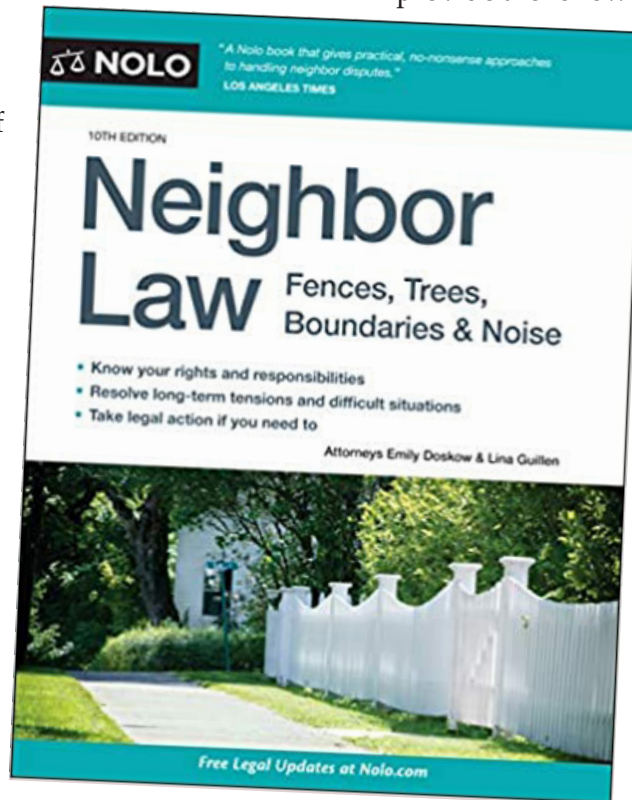
by attorneys Emily Daskow and Lina Guillen (10th Edition, Nolo Press, 2020) contains a great deal of useful information on dealing with noisy neighbors.²¹ The authors suggest several approaches to dealing with noisy neighbors:

1. **Get prepared.** Learn the law, including local ordinances, residential zoning rules, subdivision rules, state laws, and tenant rules.
2. **Open lines of communication.** Daskow and Guillen write, “Long before you complain, before you even have a problem, get out there and meet your neighbors. The long-range benefit of simply being able to call someone by name, of creating even the tiniest bit of goodwill, is enormous when a problem arises.”
3. **Never be hasty.** The authors recommend a “wait and see” approach rather than reacting to a noise problem in anger and haste. Perhaps the noise will be a one-time occurrence.
4. **Keep a log.** The authors state that “the most effective way to remain in control when faced with a neighbor is to sit down and describe on paper what is happening. This simple act will distance you from your anger and help you manage the situation. Writing down your concerns will tell you how serious the problem is and how often you are being disturbed.”
5. **Know who is responsible.** Rather than making an anonymous call to the police to complain about excessive noise, Daskow and Guillen recommend first discerning the source of the noise. The police and landlords will appreciate your assistance.
6. **Approach the neighbor.** The authors note that “Complaining to a neighbor is never easy. In fact, it can be so intimidating that people put up with terrible problems for years to avoid confrontation.

However, by being prepared and using common sense, you can make the task less unpleasant and much more productive.” In approaching your neighbor, Daskow and Guillen advise that you:

- Assume the neighbor doesn’t know.
- Expect a complaint against you.
- Choose neutral ground.
- Talk about something else first.
- Introduce the problem as a common concern.
- State the complaint.

7. **Complain in writing.** The authors note that sometimes people would prefer to complain in writing rather than in person. If so, a diplomatic approach is the best choice. Daskow and Guillen provide the following sample complaint letter:



Dear Mr. Costas,

I am sure you would want to know that your dog has kept me awake for three nights this week. Could you please put him in the house after 10 p.m. so that he won't disturb the neighborhood? Thank you very much.

Sincerely yours,

Alice Baxter

8. **Turn to the authorities for help.** Daskow and Guillen observe that: “sometimes all the courtesy and common sense in the world just don’t work. Sometimes neighbors can be thoughtless, nasty, and dangerous.” Therefore,

noise victims must often seek the assistance of the authorities, including the police, the zoning board, animal control, or the public health department. If applicable, you might also try contacting your neighborhood association or co-op board. The authors note that these entities “should be more receptive to your complaint because of your own efforts. Tell them what you have done to try to solve the problem. Present a copy of the records you have kept. When several people are involved, get everyone to complain at once, and keep it up until you get some action.”

9. **Try mediation.** If your neighbor dismisses your

complaint, Daskow and Guillen suggest engaging the services of a trained mediator: “In mediation, you work out your own agreement with the help of a trained, neutral third party (the mediator). One reason mediation between neighbors is so successful is because sometimes both neighbors need to have their say. Often, both have complaints about other issues. Once they are aired, a compromise involving everything in dispute is possible.”

- 10. Take the Neighbor to Court.** The authors of [Neighbor Law](#) note that: “You are protected from a noisy neighbor by local, and sometimes state, law.... Noise regulations are enforced by the police, landlords, neighborhood associations, and the courts. And when you are affected by your neighbor’s excessive noise, you can sue your neighbor for creating a private nuisance. You can ask a court for money damages and to have the noise stopped.”

What you really want is for the noise to disappear. However, having the neighbor ordered to pay you money can be amazingly effective in regaining your quiet. If the noise continues, you have a “continuing nuisance” and can sue again and again.

Small claims court is a very effective venue for noise lawsuits: “It’s easy, inexpensive, and you don’t need a lawyer.”

According to Daskow and Guillen, this is what you must show to sue for private nuisance due to noise:

- There is excessive and disturbing noise.
- The person you are suing is either creating the noise or is the landlord and therefore responsible.
- Your enjoyment of your property is affected. (You don’t need to own the property--you can be a tenant.)
- You have asked the person to stop the noise (a letter should be sufficient).
- When seeking damages, you may be compensated for “loss of sleep, annoyance, or the inability to carry on normal activity without interference.”

Each state has different limits on the amount you may seek in small claims court. (Sometimes, limits vary within states, county-by-county.) According to [Neighbor Law](#) (Chapter 20), the current limits range from \$2,500 in Kentucky to \$25,000 in Tennessee.²²

The authors point out that monetary damages from a small claims lawsuit can add up: “Once you have sued in small claims court, if the noise continues, you can sue again. Also, if other people are affected, get together with

your neighbors. If ten people sue for \$2,500 each, that’s \$25,000. Do it again--another \$25,000. Sooner or later, the noise should stop.”²³

Suing in regular court is also an option: “If you choose to sue in regular court and hire a lawyer, get the attorney to write a threatening letter before you sue; that may be all that it takes. Sadly, some neighbors can be pretty rotten, and nothing short of a judge’s order or high money damages will change the situation.”²⁴

Regardless of the strategy you pursue, remember that the noise victim is in the right and the noisemaker is in the wrong. Stick to your guns and pursue your grievance. Hopefully, peace and quiet will be yours.

Media

Start by researching all local media organizations. Put together a media profile of every newspaper, magazine, radio station, and television station in your area. Include the name and type of media, name of news editor, deadlines, and relevant reporters’ names. Try to meet with reporters in person. To develop a relationship. Let them know of any stories you have in mind for the future, and ask what they are interested in.

Online media listings include:

- www.newspapers.com
- www.radio-locator.com
- www.radiostationworld.com

To get media coverage, you need a news angle. Appeal to human emotions, such as a sense of injustice. Spotlight noise victims.

Techniques for obtaining media coverage include holding a rally, conducting a press conference, performing a publicity stunt, staging a protest, or publishing a report. Get a high-profile person to back your cause.

The most important factor: make your story newsworthy and visually interesting. Make your story attention-grabbing, with great human interest.

Events

A rally can attract media attention and potential supporters. Other possible events include a demonstration, a march, or a protest. One possibility is to get people together in pajamas to protest late-night airport noise.

A sit-in (where people gather inside a building or space)

was a popular tactic in the 1960s. One idea is to stage a sit-in near a landscaping company that uses gas-powered leaf blowers.

Rallies should be carefully planned. Allow enough time to promote the event. In the business district, workdays at noon or 5 p.m. can draw attention from passers-by. On weekends and holidays, consider popular shopping areas. Find out if there are other events planned on the same day, and avoid scheduling then. Once you choose a date, get a police permit and publicize the event.

When organizing events, divide the work up among group members.

Have one person take care of props and another take care of publicity. Advertise with press releases, media interviews, handbills, leaflets, posters, and e-mail. Remember to include contact information. Create banners and visuals. Have a slogan or chant that summarizes your main point. Rent or borrow cameras and speakers to record the event. Digital cameras are a good way to send

images easily to newspapers and e-mail lists. Remember to write a press release and distribute it beforehand.

When the day comes, be confident and enthusiastic. Public events can evoke many reactions, both positive and negative. If you meet opposition, be calm and reasonable. Don't get into a fight or argument. You are in the public eye.

Writing a Press Release

GUIDELINES

Have an effective lead and a catchy title. Present the story in a straightforward, fact-oriented way, and avoid fancy language and the overuse of adjectives. Tell your audience why they should be interested. Think about how people will relate to your news and if they will feel connected to it. Write in the third person, as though the press release will appear in the newspaper word for word. Provide complete contact information.

Press Release Template

Date: **HEADLINE**
Organization Name
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact:
Your Name
Telephone Number
Fax Number
E-mail Address
Website address

Your City, Your State — This is the opening paragraph. It should contain all of the particulars such as who, what, when, where, and why.

This is the body of your press release. Make sure to include any relevant information about your cause or event. Include things like the importance of reducing the level of noise in your community, your efforts to reduce noise, and the importance of others joining you in your fight. Include quotes from other noise affected by noise in your community, elected officials, and expert opinions and quotes on noise.

This is the last paragraph in your press release. Here you want to restate the contact information for you and/or your organization. This paragraph should read: "For additional information or a sample copy, contact: List all of your contact information."

The very last sentence should include information about the history of your organization, if applicable. If not, it should be a short biographical blurb about you. For example, "John Public is a 20-year resident of Your Community. John is a writer who seeks to reduce noise pollution from boom cars to enhance the quality of life in Your Town.

###

(The ### symbol indicates the end of the press release. Do not omit.)

West Chester, Pennsylvania, Wins Award for Addressing Noise

[Noise Free America: A Coalition to Promote Quiet](#)

For immediate release: June 8, 2021

Contact: Ted Rueter

director@noisefree.org

877-664-7366

Chapel Hill: The West Chester, Pennsylvania, police department and mayor have won a “Healthy Soundscape” award from [Noise Free America: A Coalition to Promote Quiet](#) for taking action to reduce noise in the downtown area. Police will soon implement “Operation Quiet Downtown,” which will entail adding traffic patrols and citing the loudest motor vehicle offenders.

West Chester police chief James Morehead stated that “we wish for everyone to be able to enjoy this incredible town and everything it has to offer. Our residents and visitors should be able to walk and eat in town without noise that interferes with everyday life.”

“This has been a long-standing quality of life and health issue,” said West Chester mayor Jordan Norley. “Let it be known now: if you harass our residents and pedestrians to show off how loud your car or motorcycle is, West Chester won’t stand for that any longer. We will pull you over, and you will be ticketed. Think before you try to show off.”

Mike Molesevich, the former mayor of nearby Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, noted that West Chester’s police department and mayor deserve admiration for taking action to reduce noise in their downtown. “Reducing noise is good for business and property values in all towns across Pennsylvania. Other police departments should learn from West Chester that citizens want enforcement—not excuses.”

Paula Christy and Joannah McGregor, co-chairs of Union County Citizens Against Noise, “applaud the police chief and the mayor of West Chester their efforts to improve the quality of life of their citizens by curbing noise pollution. Our elected officials in Mifflinburg have brushed aside our pleas for noise control with demeaning comments, while performing the necessary non-meaningful steps to enable them to say that they pursued the matter.” Christy and McGregor state that “we were given many excuses as to how difficult it is to enforce the laws regarding this problem; we hope that the example of West Chester will show that it is possible and provide an initiative for officials in communities such as ours to recognize the seriousness of noise pollution. We all have the right to live in a peaceful, healthy environment.”

Shannon Brown, the founder of the Pennsylvania Association for Noise Pollution Abatement (based in Lackawanna county), asserted that “Pennsylvania communities already possess tools to address illegal vehicle noise. West Chester is fulfilling its duty to protect community members and visitors from illegal vehicle noise. West Chester correctly understands that noise is a quality-of-life issue for residents and an economic issue for merchants and downtown development.”

Summing up the good news of West Chester’s actions against unnecessary noise, West Grove resident Sherrill Franklin stated, “I am looking forward to dining in downtown West Chester and enjoying the quiet!”

Noise Free America: A Coalition to Promote Quiet is a national citizens’ organization devoted to noise reduction. Past winners of the Healthy Soundscape award include Portland, Oregon; Washington, DC; and three pre-teen siblings fighting gas-powered leaf blowers in Lafayette, California.

###

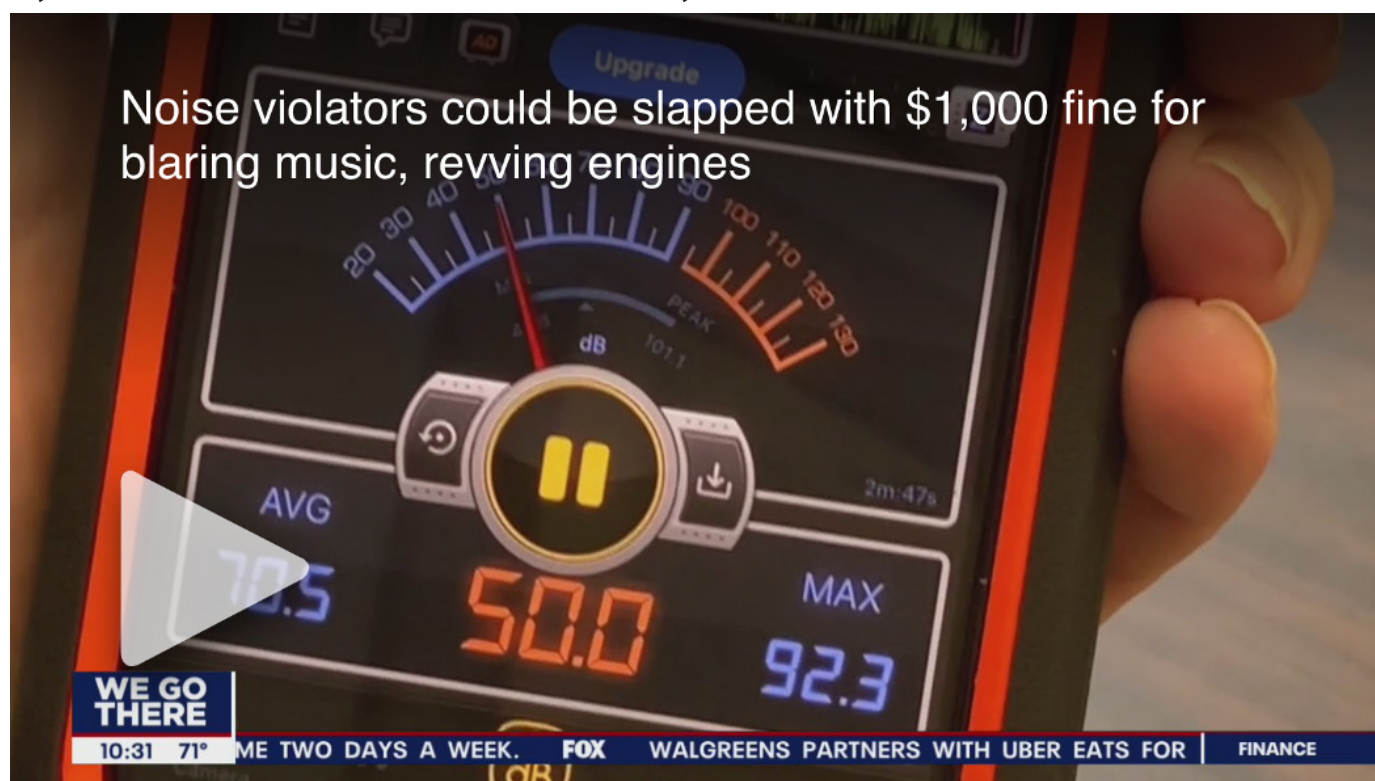
TV News Story in Response to Sample Press Release

The press release on the preceding page generated a 3:25 news report on Fox 29 in Philadelphia and a posting of the video and news story on Fox 29's [website](#).

Noise violators could be slapped with \$1,000 fine for blaring music, revving engines

By Kelly Rule Published June 15, 2021 Updated June 16, 2021 Chester County FOX 29 Philadelphia

CHESTER COUNTY, Pa. -- Blaring your music or intentionally revving your engine while driving into the Borough of West Chester could land you a \$1,000 fine. Mayor Jordan Norley and Police Chief James Morehead teamed up in mid-April with a plan called "Operation Quiet-Downtown." Signs posted in the borough say "zero tolerance for loud mufflers, stereos, motorcycles."



Faye Worrell, a West Chester resident, says she likes to dine out often but knows what it's like to be mid-conversation and have loud noises interrupt her. "It's really disturbing and it's a little annoying to families," she said. "Parking is probably our biggest issue here but noise is probably the second big issue."

West Chester Borough Council-member Donald Braceland says that sound level over 85 decibels is considered potentially damaging to hearing. "You get up to 110, 130, 140 you're up in the same noise level as a pistol shot which can blow your eardrums out. It's very, very loud and you get a canyon effect because of the buildings so the sound kind of bounces a little bit," he said.

Both John McCloskey and Jackie Dicampoli, of West Chester, say they think this fine is a bit outrageous.

However, Chief Moreland says they have yet to issue a \$1,000 citation. The minimum violation price is \$250. Over a month and a half, they've issued only six noise-related citations.

"They're getting up behind people who may not be paying attention to them and then they're revving their engine to get attention, that type of behavior will not be tolerated," Moreland explained.

Borough leaders say there could be more enforcement in the future, including cameras that measure noise decibels. They add that their goal is to educate and stopping to stop intentional disruptive behavior.

Holding a Press Conference

Holding a press conference is another way to publicize your noise concerns. Choose a convenient, central location. Verify that the venue has all necessary equipment. Hold the press conference in the morning, for the convenience of reporters. You might hold a press conference near a business that sells noisy equipment. Be visually creative. Promote the event through press releases, media interviews, letters to the editor, e-mails, and handbills.

Make your presentation interesting. Focus on the human interest angle, such as a boom car victim unable to sleep. Keep it brief. Leave time for questions and be prepared with well-reasoned responses.

Put together a press kit for journalists, including a press release, background material, fact sheets, brochures, and copies of slides or visuals. Distribute the press kits before the press conference. You can also mail press kits to journalists who did not attend the event.



On radio, focus on the interviewer and forget that people are listening.

Try not to cough (but locate the cough button, just in case). Bring interesting sound clips.

On television, pay attention to body language and visuals. Look at the reporter, not the camera. Stay relaxed and open. Do not cross your arms, as it creates a barrier. Bring in visual aids, such as background pictures and props.

Letters to the Editor

A letter to the editor is a response to a news story, a column, or another letter. It is often the most popular section of the newspaper. The editor may receive hundreds of letters a day, so make yours concise and well-written. Include your full name and all contact information. Identify the article you are referring to by its headline and date. Focus on the main points. Be short and clear. Avoid clichés and puns. Attack ideas, and not the writers of them.

Highlight the article you are responding to. Have someone proofread the letter.

Appearing on Radio & TV: How to Get On

Radio and television producers look for significant, interesting stories involving politics, health, education, and social problems. Compile a list of appropriate radio and television stations to contact. Evaluate their priorities, their viewpoint, and their style. Are they aggressive? Friendly? Send news releases, sound clips, and visuals. Follow up with a phone call. Do everything you can to make things easy for reporters.

The most important thing about television: it is visual. A story that is visually interesting will have a greater chance of getting aired.

PREPARATION

Develop rapport with the interviewer beforehand. Decide on your key points and practice, practice, practice. Ask what questions will be asked.

Suggest questions yourself. Keep repeating your main points, your organization's name, and website address.

Businesses & Public Areas

NOISY BUSINESSES

Most stores and shopping malls play "background music." Businesses believe that playing music will put customers in the mood to shop longer and spend more—when in fact the opposite is true.

Find alternatives to noisy stores by supporting small stores and farmers' markets. Many older Target stores have no background music; many people find it a pleasure to shop there.

Pipe Down (www.pipedown.info) is an activist group based in Great Britain which campaigns against background music. According to Pipe Down, more people dislike piped music than like it.

In 1994, a London Gatwick Airport survey found that 43 percent said they disliked background music and 34 percent liked it (the remainder were impartial). Gatwick has since stopped playing background music.

EXPRESSING CONCERN

Speak to the manager about the store's loud music. Be calm and convincing. State how often you go to the store and that you will not return if the loud noise continues. You might also collect your receipts from a quiet store and mail them to a noisy store. Noisy stores will get the point: they're losing money by blasting loud music.

When you complain, have your goal in mind from the start. Be specific about what happened and when, and be prepared with a recommendation. Be kind and polite. If complaining in person does not prove effective, it is time to put your complaint into writing.

LETTERS OF COMPLAINT

Letters of complaint communicate that you are very serious about noise problems. It also makes a record of the complaint for future reference.

When writing a letter, be courteous. Do not use harsh language. Be firm but polite. Do not threaten a lawsuit. Be concise. Set a reasonable deadline for a response. If you receive no response, write another letter or make a phone call. Keep all correspondence.

SAMPLE LETTERS OF COMPLAINT

Here is a sample complaint letter to a company whose music is far too loud and annoying:

Month XX, 20XX

Your Name

Your Address

Your City, Your State, Zip Code

Name of Contact Person/Consumer Complaint Division

Company Name Street Address

Dear [Contact Person/Complaint Division]

Re: [account number / incident]

On [Saturday, October 7, 2021] I entered your store at [location] and was appalled by the loud music, which forced me to leave immediately because I could not think. I have complained to the manager in the store. Unfortunately, your response was inadequate. I am disappointed because I enjoy your products but am not able to shop under such conditions.

Please understand that my business will go elsewhere should this persist. I look forward to your reply and for a resolution to this problem.

I will wait ten working days before taking action in other ways (a petition / protest, etc.). Please contact me at the above address or by telephone at (home and/or office number).

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

Enclosure(s) - [list any documents enclosed, such as testaments or receipts]

cc: [reference anyone you send this letter to, such as a different division of the company]

Here is another sample complaint letter, aimed toward a business that attracts noisy customers.

Month XX, 20XX

Your Name Your Address

Your City, Your State, Zip Code

Manager/Owner Company/Facility Name City, State Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms. Owner,

Allow me to say that I truly love your product/service and I have shopped/eaten at your establishment on a regular basis. I have enjoyed your product/service so much, in fact, that I have often recommended it to my friends and acquaintances.

Unfortunately, I find that I am no longer comfortable in your establishment because of the frequent and obnoxious thumping of boom cars. I estimate that I spend more than \$1,000 a year in your store/facility/ restaurant, and I feel badly that my friends and I are forced to put that into a competitor's cash register. I would rather it go to you-- which is why I am writing.

I think it's a tragedy when a group of disruptive noisemakers are allowed to interfere with our daily lives and pursuits. At times, I get some of that noise near my home, and I certainly call the police when I hear offenders in my own neighborhood. My insistence at having them enforce current regulations in my area has made a difference. I am also reviewing our local noise ordinance

and speaking with others who are interested in putting an end to this offensive behavior that takes away from our quality of life.

When the boom box noise has been controlled in this area, I would be pleased to begin shopping at/using your store/facility/restaurant again.

I encourage you to work with the local police department to greatly strengthen enforcement of our noise ordinances. You are losing business because of the constant presence of boom cars.

Yours truly,

[Your Name]

FINDING SUPPORTERS

There are many ways to gain support from other consumers. You can connect with people, businesses, and happenings in your neighborhood at [Nextdoor](#). You can file an online complaint with the [Better Business Bureau](#). Join Noise Free America's mailing list; you may register on the bottom of our [homepage](#). You can voice your opinion by starting a petition at [Change.org](#). Another website that facilitates complaints is [Complain-Complain.com](#).

SAMPLE PETITION

[TITLE OF PETITION]

[Name of Sponsor, e.g., Noise Free America Petition]

Addressed to _____

[Name of Person(s)/Business to receive the petition]

We, the undersigned, would like to bring your attention to the following problem, with the recommendation(s):

[Statement of petition example:]

Your constant use of leaf blowers every day at five in the morning is disturbing and damaging to those in the area. We demand that you refrain from using noisy leaf blowers at all times. A noiseless product to collect leaves and debris is the Right Hand Push Lawn Sweeper, available for a reasonable price at [amazon.com](#).

Agreed upon by the following:

NAME	ADDRESS	GROUP	TELEPHONE
------	---------	-------	-----------

[list of signatures, addresses, affiliations, and phone #s]

NOISE IN PUBLIC AREAS

Unnecessary noise is increasingly common in airports, bathrooms, and public transportation. In 2005, trains in Essex were equipped with piped-in television. Travelers disliked the disturbance so much that they locked themselves into the public bathrooms at the stations to protest. A British poll indicated that 67 percent of travelers were against piped-in television, and it is no longer used at that station.

Here are some resources to complain about noise in public places:

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Amtrak has constant announcements in their trains, which is an annoyance for passengers. They have a complaint section on their [website](#).



AIRPORT NOISE ISSUES

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has a Noise Complaints & Inquiries section on its [website](#). You can contact an FAA official to complain about:

- Noise associated with an airport, concerns about wildlife disturbances, or get information about ongoing noise abatement studies and FAA's sound insulation program
- Noise not associated with an airport or civil helicopter noise
- A safety or noise issue caused by low flying aircraft

You might also email [FAA's Aviation Noise Ombudsman](#), who serves as a contact for issues about aircraft noise questions or complaints.

If you would prefer to send a letter through the mail, the website also includes an address for the Aviation Noise Ombudsman to get information about ways to contact different departments regarding a particular issue:

Federal Aviation Administration

Aviation Noise Ombudsman

AEE-2 800 Independence Avenue SW

Washington, DC 20591

Elected Officials

MEETING WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

To seek an appointment with an elected official, make a request in writing to the secretary or scheduler. Tell them whom you represent and your agenda. Include possible meeting times. Follow up with a phone call. Don't be disappointed if your meeting is with a staff member; they often have a great deal of influence.

Make sure you are well-prepared. Research the background, voting record, and views of the elected official. Have your goal in mind. Keep the tone conversational. Stick to your central points. Be professional and courteous. Get the business cards of staff members. Send or request any follow-up material. Be sure to send a thank you note.

LETTERS TO ELECTED OFFICIALS

Written letters are more effective than e-mail because they demonstrate seriousness of commitment. Limit the letter to one or two pages and one topic. Use applicable real-life situations, such as the effects of 3 a.m. garbage collections. Suggest ways that legislation would improve your community. Ask for a response. Include your name and address to show you are a constituent.

You may find the names of your U.S. Senators and Representative at [congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov).

FORMAT AND TIPS FOR LETTERS

To Your U.S. Senator

The Honorable (full name)
(Room #) (Name) Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

To Your U.S. Representative

The Honorable (full name)
(Room #) (Name) House Office Building
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

Chairperson of a Committee or the Speaker of the House

Address them as:

Dear Mr. Chairman: (or Dear Madam Chairwoman:)

Dear Mr. Speaker: (or Dear Madam Speaker:)

Cite these legislation identifiers when writing to members of Congress:

House Bills: "H.R. "

House Resolutions: "H.RES. "

House Joint Resolutions: "H.J.RES. "

Senate Bills: "S. "

Senate Resolutions: "S.RES. "

Senate Joint Resolutions: "S.J.RES. "

CALLING ELECTED OFFICIALS

You may call your Members of Congress through the Capital switchboard at **202-224-3121**. Be sure to provide your address to show you are a constituent. Do not get mad; be straight to the point and brief. Tell them of public support for your position. Express appreciation for the staff member's time.



FEDERAL COMPLAINTS ONLINE

Noise Free America's website has links to websites to get your message to Congress. They are listed under "[Federal Complaints](#)" on the "Resources" page.

- [USA.gov](#): This site connects citizens to federal government agencies and services. The "[Contact Elected Officials](#)" page has information on contacting local, state and federal officials, including the U.S. President.
- [GovSpot](#): This website also has many resources to monitor federal government activities.
- [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#): You can find news and information about highway safety as well as send an e-mail about your thoughts and concerns.
- [USA Blue Pages](#): This website provides contact information for federal and state government agencies and information in your area.

Police

CONTACTING POLICE

Do not hesitate to call the police about noise problems. Call the non-emergency number, not 911. Keep the phone number handy. Call as the noise is occurring and provide the address of the noisemaker. Record license plate numbers of the offender. Ask for a police report. If it is the middle of the night, ask them to call you back in the morning. Call as often as necessary. Get to know an officer or a commander and build a relationship.

You may also file a formal citizen complaint with the police. Find out if this should be done through a letter, e-mail, phone call, or in person.

MEETINGS

Many communities have town hall forums where residents can discuss issues with police officers. Some police departments have police community councils.

Anti-Noise Ordinances

Almost all municipalities have noise ordinances. Some deal with audible sound within a certain distance; others monitor the decibels of car stereos. The acceptable limit of a car stereo is usually between 70 and 80 decibels.

Police should be concerned about noise pollution, especially boom cars, because it is a gateway crime. Many drug dealers use boom cars to advertise their presence. Boom car drivers are often associated with gangs, guns, drugs, and crime.

It is important to research your jurisdiction's laws. Also, investigate who, what, where, and when people have registered noise complaints, to build support for your case.

[FindLaw.com](#) has links to local ordinances. The Bureau of Justice Statistics has a website with information on crime, victims, and offenders.²⁵ The [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency website](#)²⁶ deals with noise pollution

issues. Noise Free America's website has links on its "[Resources](#)"²⁷ page to examples of many anti-noise ordinances.

[St. Petersburg, Florida](#), requires that all noise must be under 60 decibels after 11:00 pm on weekdays and midnight on weekends. Noise violations result in up to 90 days in jail and a fine of \$500.

[Lorain, Ohio](#), has an extensive anti-noise ordinance. It gives police the right to tow boom cars and charge the driver for removal the sound system.

In [Albuquerque, New Mexico](#), anyone who produces noise over legal limits can be cited by the Environmental Health Department. They can be fined up to \$1,000 and may be subject to an injunction.

Police officers in [Chicago](#) can seize boom car stereos that can be heard from 75 feet away. Owners may be fined \$615. Since this law went into effect, boom car business is down by one-third and at least three car stereo stores have closed.

The Noise Control Act of 1972 granted the Environmental Protection Agency the authority to impose noise restrictions. In 1983, the EPA codified a motorcycle and motorcycle exhaust system labeling program (40 Code of Federal Regulations &&205.158.206.169).

The labeling program requires that motorcycle and motorcycle exhaust manufacturers to [attach a permanent seal to their manufactured product, stating that it meets the EPA's noise emission restriction of 82 decibels](#). Any motorcyclist that does not have this label is violating federal law and should be prosecuted.

Many motorcyclists claim that "loud pipes save lives" by alerting motorists to their presence on the road. But

researchers at the Polytechnic University of Bucharest (in conjunction with the Netherlands-based noise emissions specialist Enviro Consult) have found that even the loudest motorcycle exhausts are hard to hear in a modern car.²⁸

Several cities are enforcing the EPA "label match-up" regulation, including [Boston](#) and [Denver](#). In Green Bay, Wisconsin, citizens are allowed to report loud



motorcycles and automobiles via [a form on the Green Bay Police Department's website](#). Police then determine the owner of the vehicle, pay him a visit, take a decibel reading, and check for modified mufflers and an EPA stamp. Noise violators are issued a ticket.

New York City police are empowered to use the “plainly audible standard.” Motorcyclists and boom car drivers can be issued a citation if the noise is plainly audible at 200 feet. The “plainly audible standard” has been used and upheld by courts in many other states.²⁹

In New York City, police are authorized “to impound cars with loud stereos and to hold the cars as evidence until the citation has been adjudicated. The impoundment gives the offender extra incentive to appear in court and/or pay the fine and, at a minimum, removes the car from the streets for a brief time.”³⁰

Quiet Alternatives

Be aware of the noises around you. The National Institute of Standards and Technology recommends doing the following to make your home acoustically sound:

- Place vibration mounts under major appliances and foam under small appliances.
- Use window drapes.
- Install padded vinyl, carpet, or linoleum to absorb sound.
- Seal holes or cracks in the doors with caulking or a minimum expansion foam sealant.
- Replace metal garbage cans with plastic ones.

Using quiet products is a great way to reduce your exposure to noise and encourage others to reduce their noisemaking. One quiet product is the Earthwise 21-inch Leaf & Grass



Push Lawn Sweeper, an outdoor product that collects grass clippings and leaves. It is a great alternative to leaf blowers. Easy to assemble, it may be used on lawns, patios, driveways and parking lots. It has a 2.6-gallon collection bin that is easy to empty. It sells for around \$130 and is available on [amazon.com](#). The slightly larger, [26-inch Right Hand Push Lawn Sweeper](#) sells for about \$150 on Amazon.

Battery-powered lawn mowers make virtually no noise. They also weigh less, are easy to handle, can run for an hour or more, and are available in both push and self-propelled varieties. They are easier to maintain and store than gas-powered mowers and are competitively priced.

Push lawn mowers are an alternative. They make no noise or air pollution and require little maintenance.

Corded and battery-powered leaf blowers, grass and hedge trimmers are readily available and make much less noise than gas-powered versions. Prices have come down rapidly for these and other landscaping tools.

Conclusion

The cause of fighting noise pollution is making progress as public awareness of the physical and social harms caused by noise increases. More cities and states are

passing and enforcing tough noise laws and ordinances. Increased popularity of hybrid and electric vehicles, electric and battery-powered landscaping equipment and redesigned appliances lead to quieter roads, neighborhoods, and homes. New noise reduction laws bring us closer to quieter living both indoors and out.

Every action toward a more peaceful society

makes a difference. We have the power to create a healthier, safer, and quieter future.

Endnotes

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