

# Noise Program

Promoting a Prosperous and Harmonious City



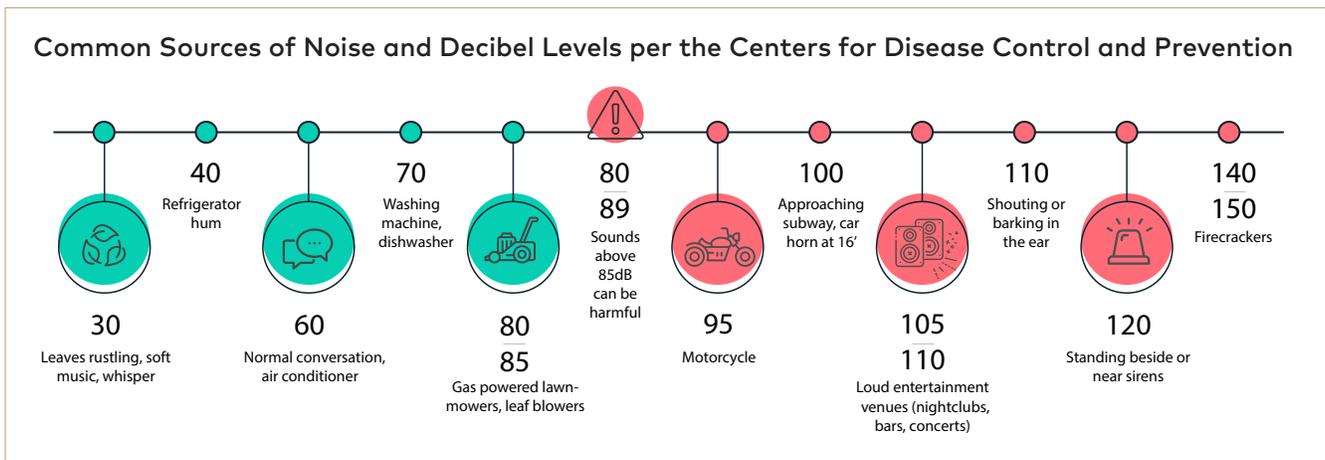
As Portland’s population grows, the need to equitably address environmental health issues like noise pollution is increasingly important. The Office of Community & Civic Life’s Noise Program supports the city’s lively spirit, safety, and health by reviewing requests for City Noise Code variances for exciting and essential events — like music festivals, the Portland Marathon, and construction— and educates the public on the health issue of urban noise pollution by enforcing the City’s Noise Code Title 18.

## What is noise?

The City of Portland’s Noise Code (Title 18) defines a noise disturbance as any sound which: “(a) injures or endangers the safety or health of humans; or (b) annoys or disturbs a reasonable person of normal sensitivities.”

Our primary focus is to address and educate the public on the following types of noise disturbances within Portland city limits:

- Amplified sounds (speech, music, events, parades)
- Commercial and industrial operations
- Residential HVAC equipment
- Motor vehicles (in rare cases)
- Home equipment and powered tools
- Leaf blowers
- Construction and construction equipment



## What is the acceptable level of noise in my area?

We scientifically measure the level of noise in decibels based on the zone in which you live or work to determine if a source of noise violates the code. The table below shows the allowable decibel levels set by the zoning of where the noise is coming from (source zone), as it is heard and measured with a noise meter at a separate property were the noise is heard (receiver zone).

### Permissible Sound Levels (7 a.m. to 10 p.m., otherwise subtract 5 dBA)

Source Zone (where sound is coming from)	Receiver Zone (where sound is received, measured at property line)			
	Residential	Open space	Commercial	Industrial
Residential	55	55	60	65
Open space	55	55	60	65
Commercial	60	60	70	70
Industrial	65	65	70	75

The Noise Program has decibel meters that can be loaned out to help determine if a violation might exist (the loaner program is temporary suspended due to the pandemic). Our meters only help to determine a baseline sound so a noise inspector can follow up, if needed. We cannot discuss sound readings taken with cell phones apps or multi-meters as their level of accuracy is not reliable.

## How do I apply for a noise variance?

You should apply for a noise variance if you have a reasonable request for operating outside the guidelines of the City of Portland's Noise Code, Title 18. Before you fill out an application, you must notify the neighbors and businesses that may be impacted by the noise from your proposed activity. Because of the required notification process, you're much less likely to make neighbors upset if you tell them about the event before obtaining a variance. Please check with the Noise Program to find out about the best way to notify nearby neighbors. Most cases require that all neighbors within a 500 foot or two block radius of the location of the sound be given public notice with adequate time to offer public comments on a variance application. Our office can give you the template to use for public notice to the community to invite their input.

We have separate applications for construction activities and for all other activities or events. Please note that we cannot begin the formal review of the noise variance request until the application is complete and all required fees are paid. You can find complete instructions on how to apply for a noise variance on our website [www.portlandoregon.gov/civic/noisevariance](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/civic/noisevariance).

## How do I file a noise complaint?

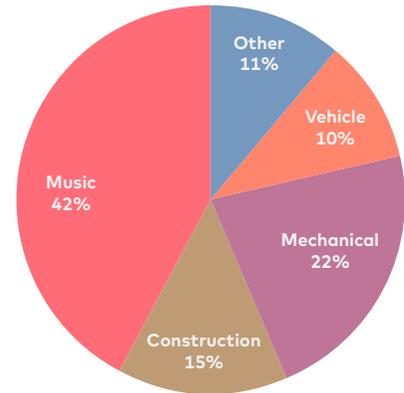
To report a noise disturbance, please first check to see if it is within our program's control (see page one). Once confirmed, please file your comment to [www.portlandoregon.gov/civic/noisecomplaint](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/civic/noisecomplaint) or email the Noise Program at [noise@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:noise@portlandoregon.gov). Multiple complaints from the same person about the same noise disturbance will result in significant delays to our response.

Please **do not submit complaints** for the following types of noise disturbances, which are outside of our jurisdiction:

- **Animal noises from a residence** (i.e., barking dogs)-Please contact Multnomah County Animal Services at 503-988-7387.
- **Chickens/roosters and urban wildlife**-Please contact the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability at 503-823-1174.
- **Aircraft-in-flight** (i.e., planes and helicopters)-Please contact the Port of Portland at 503-460-4100.
- **Train activity regulated by Federal Code**-Please contact the Federal Railway Administration at 1-800-724-5998.
- **Vehicle noise**-Please contact the non-emergency police dispatch at 503-823-3333.
- **Watercraft**-Please contact the Harbor Master 503-241-8283.
- **Garbage/recycling noise**-Please contact the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability at 503-823-7202.
- **Noise from human voices**-Covered under Oregon and Federal Freedom of Speech rights unless voices are so loud as to be considered "disturbing the peace," in which case, please contact the non-emergency police dispatch at 503-823-3333.
- **Children at play**-We do not regulate children and the various recreational equipment they use such as basketball nets or skateboard ramps.
- **Daycare operations**-We do not regulate daycare operations and the sounds from children at daycare facilities.
- **Emergency warning devices**-Devices used to alert the public of a potential danger such as backup alarms, first response vehicle sirens, garage vehicle exiting warning devices, and similar warning sounds.

In 2020, the Noise Program received a total of 1,770 noise complaints

- 743: Music, including home stereos and band practice
- 393: Mechanical, including power tools and leaf blowers
- 255: Construction, including projects during and outside of allowable hours
- 200: Other, including human activity and barking dogs
- 179: Vehicle, including revving engines and motorcycles



## Contact Us

For more information, visit our website: [portlandoregon.gov/civic/noise](http://portlandoregon.gov/civic/noise), email us: [noise@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:noise@portlandoregon.gov), or call: 503-823-7350.



OFFICE OF  
**Community  
& Civic Life**

Promoting the Common Good: The Office of Community & Civic Life is building stronger communities by supporting and empowering Portlanders. We think, act, and partner with our communities to better understand and take care of their diverse needs. We invite you to join us in this continuous, much needed work to make our communities safer and more welcoming for all.