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Ref: Noise in the Cape Town CBD

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CITY HEALTH — SPECIALISED SERVICES

P R E L I M I N A R Y C O P Y

Noise in the Cape Town CBD

25 July 2011

The vibrant night life of the City brings with it an unwanted element – NOISE!!! While clubbers are enjoying themselves in entertainment establishments, others are being negatively affected by the noise which penetrates into living areas and bedrooms. Music noise is not the only source of unwanted noise.

Some sources of noise:

1. Street noise (people talking/ shouting)
2. Traffic noise
3. Sirens (police/ alarms)
4. Mechanical equipment (Air-conditioning equipment)
5. Entertainment noise

How does the City of Cape Town deal with noise in the CBD?

Noise is dealt with by various City agencies, depending on the type of noise. For example,

- Music noise is dealt with by either the City Health Department (Environmental) or Law Enforcement or both.
- Noise from other sources such as machinery is dealt with by the City's Health Department - Environmental.
- Traffic Department will deal with traffic related noise.
- Sound proofing of premises: A place of entertainment (where music and dancing is anticipated), must carry the necessary Entertainment license to do so. Before an entertainment license is issued, the City requires that the establishment is adequately soundproofed.
- Offenders can be fined or summonsed to court.
- If found guilty, fines of up to R20 000 or sentences of up to two years imprisonment or both, can be applied.

What can residents do to minimise noise?

There are some practical things that can be done to minimise noise effect.

1. Inside of the residence: Noise will bounce off hard surfaces. Carpeting, upholstery, cushions and curtaining will help to absorb noise.

2. Windows: windows should be kept closed but make sure to have alternative sources of fresh air and ventilation.
3. Door and window seals: Ensure that patio sliders and windows have good sealing material. Gaps in the seals or poor quality seals will allow noise to penetrate.
4. Screens: Curtaining, blinds and shutters will all help to reduce noise ingress.
5. Glazing: Laminated glass and/ or double glazing is also very effective in reducing noise.
6. A white noise generator: A relatively inexpensive device, that assists in will 'drowning out' unwanted noise.

What are our rights in terms of noise?

The Regulation pertaining to nuisance or disturbing noise are as follows:

Regulations:

NOISE CONTROL REGULATION IN TERMS OF SECTION 25 OF THE ENVIRONMENT CONSERVATION ACT, 1989 (ACT No. 73 OF 1989) which read *inter alia*:

Prohibition of disturbing noise

4. No person shall make, produce or cause a disturbing noise, or allow it to be made, produced or caused by any person, animal, machine, device or apparatus or any combination thereof; where a **disturbing noise** means a noise level that exceeds the ambient sound level measured continuously at the same measuring point by 7 dBA or more;

Prohibition of noise nuisance

5. No person shall –
 (a) cause a noise nuisance, or allow it to be caused,where a noise nuisance means any sound which disturbs or impairs or may disturb or impair the convenience or peace of any person.

In a nutshell: At any time, noise is restricted to a certain level, beyond which, it becomes an offence. Also, lesser noise is permitted, but not in a way that will be the cause of a nuisance. A noise nuisance can only be validated by a Magistrate in a court of law.

Where do we complain to?

Complaints can be lodged in the following manner:

1. Contact the City's central 24/7 number: 0860103089
2. Email: contact.us@capetown.gov.za
3. Website <http://www.capetown.gov.za/health>.

Typical effects of acoustic measures

To establish the degree of insulation required, one could apply the following simplified formula:

Example: street noise recorded at 70dB while the average bedroom required 40dB.

Thus $70\text{dB} - 40\text{dB} = 30\text{dB}$. The level of sound insulation applied would be 30dB.

Hereunder is a table of expected sound level reductions for various materials – values stated have either been supplied by local Acoustic Consultants or have been measured by the City’s Noise Control officials.

Laminated Glass	
Nominal thickness	Expected sound reduction
6.38mm	29dB
8.38mm	33dB
10.38mm	35dB
12.38mm	36dB
8.76mm acoustic glass	34dB
7 Acoustic special laminate	34dB
9 Acoustic special laminate	36dB
11 Acoustic special laminate	36dB
17 Acoustic special laminate	40dB

Note that recent surveys done in the CBD by the City, recorded a maximum reduction of 18.1dB for 6.38mm glass. This lower result can be attributed to imperfect sealing arrangements of windows.

Annealed Glass	
Nominal thickness	Expected sound reduction
4mm	25dB
6mm	27dB
10mm	30dB
Glass blocks 190x190x80	40dB

Double Glazing	
Nominal thickness	Expected sound reduction
24mm with 6mm glass	12dB

Heavy fabric curtaining	
Recently measured in a local hotel by the City	1.4dB

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