

What does the CITY do?

When you make a complaint to the City about noise, it is sent to the New York Police Department or the Department of Environmental Protection depending on the type of noise. All noise complaints are considered non-emergencies, meaning that the local police precinct will respond when personnel are available and not responding to emergency situations.

When the NYPD responds, the officers may not observe the source of noise when they arrive at the location. This may occur if the source has stopped making noise or has left the area.

When DEP responds to a noise complaint, they measure the decibel of sound from the source and issue a notice of violation if warranted. Additionally, the Noise Code permits different levels of noise at different times during the day, allowing City life and business to continue.

Please note that making repeat complaints to 311 within an eight hour period may not result in multiple responses by the NYPD.

What can YOU do?

If you have neighbors that are often noisy, you should contact the building owner or supervisor to try and address the issue. Apartment buildings, condominiums and co-ops typically have noise rules which provide times when certain sounds are allowed or disallowed. A first step may be to understand whether the noise violates your building rules. If so, you can ask/request the supervisor to make a complaint and address the issue. This may be the first and best step to mitigating noise.

When there is an obvious violation of the Noise Code, these conditions should be reported to 311.

REMEMBER

If any situation is an emergency, always call 911

SOUNDS OF NEW YORK

WHISPER	30dB
NORMAL CONVERSATION	50-65dB
VACUUM CLEANER @ 10 FT	70dB
WASHING MACHINE	78dB
MIDTOWN TRAFFIC	70-85dB
MOTORCYCLE	88dB
LAWNMOWER	85-90dB
TRAIN	100dB
JACKHAMMER	110dB
THUNDER	120dB
STEREO	110-120dB
NEARBY JET	130dB

WHAT NYC DOES ABOUT NOISE

*dB = decibel, the standard unit of sound

WHAT IS NOISE?

Unreasonable noise is defined by New York City Noise Code as “any excessive or unusually loud sound that disturbs the peace, comfort or repose of a reasonable person of normal sensitivities, injures or endangers the health or safety of a reasonable person of normal sensitivities or which causes injury to plant or animal life, or damage to property or business.” (New York City Administrative Code, Title 24, Chapter 2, Subchapter 1, § 24-203, 62)

In other words, unreasonable noise is sound that disturbs the peace or is a hazard to the health or safety of people or animals.

Food Vending Vehicles

Food vending vehicles are prohibited from playing jingles while stationary.

Music from Bars & Restaurants

Music cannot exceed 42 decibels when measured from inside nearby residences. It also cannot exceed 7 decibels over ambient sound level when measured on a public street 15 or more ft. away between 10pm and 7am.

Air Conditioners and Rooftop Circulation Devices

- Single circulation devices may not produce noise levels in excess of 42 decibels, as measured 3 ft. from the noise source at an open door or window of a nearby residence.

Waste Collection Vehicles

- May not emit sound levels that exceed 80 decibels at a distance of 35 ft. away. However, this restriction does not apply when the truck is compacting trash.
- When compacting trash, sound levels may not exceed 85 decibels at a distance of 35 ft. away. This only applies between 11pm and 7am, and when the truck is within 50 ft. of a residence.

COMMON TYPES OF NOISE

Noise can occur from a variety of sources, including motor vehicles, construction sites, bars, restaurants, animals, food vendors, air conditioners, circulation devices, and people who disturb the peace.

The Noise Code establishes levels of sound that are considered reasonable. Generally, unacceptable noise is sound from a source that either exceeds defined noise levels by increasing the ambient using either a daytime or nighttime standard (daytime 7am - 10pm; nighttime 10pm - 7am). The listed sources in this pamphlet and permissible levels are for reference purposes and not intended to limit the universe of possible sources of noise.

Motor Vehicles & Motorcycles

- The Noise Code prohibits excessive sound from muffler or exhaust of vehicles operating on public streets. Unacceptable sound is defined as sound which is plainly audible from the following distances:
 - 150 ft. or more from vehicles weighing less than 10,000 lbs;
 - 200 ft. or more from vehicles weighing more than 10,000 lbs;
 - 200 ft. from a motorcycle.
- In addition, horn honking is only permitted as warning of imminent danger.

HOW THE CITY RESPONDS TO NOISE

The New York Police Department (NYPD) responds to noise from the following sources:

- Clubs or bars
- Parks (except noise from a dog which is referred to DEP)
- Stores or businesses
- Streets or sidewalks
- Vehicles

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) responds to noise from the following sources:

- Construction sites
- Animals
- Food vending vehicles and their jingles
- Air conditioners and rooftop circulation devices
- Motor vehicles and motorcycles

It is important to understand that while noise can often be annoying or frustrating, it is not always a violation of the City's Noise Code. Indeed, some noise is an acceptable part of city life.

Construction Noise

- Contractors must develop a noise mitigation plan to lessen noise before the start of their work.
- This plan must be kept at the construction site.
- If complaints are received, a city inspector will ensure the plan is on site and is being followed.
- When construction is planned near “sensitive receptors” like schools and hospitals, this noise mitigation plan must take this into account.
- Noise from construction activities not covered in a mitigation plan may not exceed 10 decibels above ambient sound levels as measured inside of a residence or at 15 ft. from the source measured on a public street.
- Impulsive sounds (those of sudden, short duration) are restricted.

Hours of Construction Activity

- Normal hours are between 7am and 6pm on weekdays for construction activity.
- Repairs to one- or two- family dwellings can be made between 10am and 4pm on Saturdays and Sundays, as long as they are at least 300 ft. away from a house of worship.
- Construction can take place after hours on weekends only with authorization from the Department of Buildings or Department of Transportation and only if the contractors have a noise mitigation plan in place.
- Authorization needs to be obtained after hours, which includes weekends, for emergency work necessary for public safety.

Animal Noises

- After 7am and before 10pm, barking is considered unreasonable if plainly audible from nearby residences, and continuous for 10 minutes or more and enforcement may take place.
- After 10pm and before 7am, barking is considered unreasonable if it continues for 5 minutes or more.
- The Noise Code allows flexibility if a dog barking is an indication of distress, danger or emergency.