

Neighbourhood noise

Be a good neighbour

Most of us will have been disturbed at some time by neighbourhood or residential noise and there are probably occasions when we have been responsible for causing the disturbance ourselves. The current trends towards smaller block sizes in residential areas have increased the probability of producing noise that may affect others.

As a good neighbour, whether you are a resident or a business, you must not unreasonably interfere with a person's enjoyment of their home. It's important to be aware of the needs of others, especially when using noisy equipment.

Talk to neighbours. Find out what concerns they have and seek suggestions to resolve problems. Solutions can often be found that satisfy everyone. In many cases, people are not aware they are making noise that may be disturbing their neighbours.

[The Northern Territory Noise Management Framework Guideline](#)¹ (the guideline) outlines what you can and can't do when it comes to noise. It also provides advice on how the community can make a complaint about a particular noise problem.

Recommended prohibited times

Noise from residential premises should not be heard (audible) inside a neighbour's 'habitable' room at the times listed in the below table for the relevant type of noise. These recommended times aim to minimise noise when many people are sleeping or resting.

A habitable room means any room other than a:

- garage
- storage area
- bathroom
- laundry
- toilet
- pantry.

Noise source	Time when noise should not be heard
Motor vehicles (except when entering or leaving residential premises).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Before 8:00am and after 8:00pm on weekends and public holidays.• Before 7:00am and after 8:00pm on any other day.

¹ ntepa.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/566356/noise_management_framework_guideline.pdf

Noise source	Time when noise should not be heard
<p>Power tools and equipment (powered garden tools. For example lawn mowers, leaf blowers, electric or pneumatic tools, chainsaws, circular saws, gas or air compressors and any other impacting tool or grinding equipment.</p> <p>This also covers any electric equipment or appliance including electric gardening equipment, but not electric equipment or appliances for personal care or grooming, or for heating, refrigeration or preparation of food.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before 8:00am and after 8:00pm on Sundays and public holidays. • Before 7:00am and after 8:00pm on any other day.
<p>Air conditioners, evaporative coolers and heat pump water heaters.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before 8:00am or after 10:00pm on weekends or public holidays. • Before 7:00am or after 10:00pm on any other day.
<p>Swimming pool pumps, spa pumps, water pumps other than pumps being used to fill header tanks, and domestic vacuum cleaners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before 8:00am or after 8:00pm on Sunday and public holidays. • Before 7:00am and after 8:00pm on any other day.
<p>Musical instruments and electrically amplified sound equipment (e.g. radios, TVs, tape recorders, CD and DVD players, home theatre systems and public address systems).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before 8:00am and after midnight on any Friday, Saturday or the day immediately before a public holiday. • Before 8:00am and after 10:00pm on any other day.
<p>Refrigeration units fitted to motor vehicles (this applies whether or not the vehicle is located on residential premises).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before 8:00am and after 8:00pm on weekends and public holidays. • Before 7:00am and after 8:00pm on any other day.

Note: The prohibited times apply when the noise can be heard from inside a habitable room of another residential premise. Any residential noise might still be considered unreasonable outside the prohibited times.

Recommended assigned noise levels for fixed domestic equipment

Fixed domestic equipment are those that are installed and operated in a fixed position at domestic premises. Typical examples of fixed domestic equipment include air conditioners, swimming pool equipment, spas, ducted heating, vacuum systems, water pumps or pool pumps.

Fixed domestic equipment, when they are operated within the permissible time periods, should meet the recommended assigned noise levels in the below tables.

Noise from fixed domestic equipment which are not meeting the noise levels specified in the tables may be considered unreasonable, if they interfere with use of a home or property on a recurring basis. This is particularly the case if the noise can be heard in a neighbour's home in a habitable room during night-time hours.

You may be required to take action to reduce the noise. When installing fixed equipment in your home, it's important to consider the noise impacts on your neighbours. It's more practical and cheaper to properly design and install the equipment than to try to fix noise problems later.

Air conditioners and heat pump water heaters

Night/Day	Times	Acceptable noise level on neighbours' sensitive side of boundary (dB(A))
Night time	Before 8:00am or after 10:00pm Saturday, Sunday or public holidays.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater than two metres: 35 dB(A) Less than two metres: 30 dB(A)
	Before 7:00am or after 10:00pm on any other day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater than two metres: 35 dB(A) Less than two metres: 30 dB(A)
Day time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8:00am to 10:00pm Saturday, Sunday or public holidays. 7:00am to 10:00pm on any other day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater than two metres: 45 dB(A) Less than two metres: 40 dB(A)

Pool and spa pumps

Night/Day	Times	Acceptable noise level on neighbours' sensitive side of boundary (dB(A))
Night time	Before 8:00am or after 8:00pm Saturday, Sunday or public holidays.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater than two metres: 35 dB(A) Less than two metres: 30 dB(A)
	Before 7:00am or after 8:00pm on any other day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater than two metres: 35 dB(A) Less than two metres: 30 dB(A)
Day time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8:00am to 8:00pm Saturday, Sunday or public holidays. 7:00am to 8:00pm on any other day. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater than two metres: 45 dB(A) Less than two metres: 40 dB(A)

Rainwater tank pumps

Night/Day	Times	Acceptable noise level on neighbours' sensitive side of boundary (dB(A))
Night time	10:00pm to 7:00am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater than two metres: 40 dB(A) Less than two metres: 35 dB(A)
Day time	7:00am to 10:00pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater than two metres: 45 dB(A) Less than two metres: 40 dB(A)

Recommended assigned noise levels for non-fixed machines and power tools

Non-fixed domestic machine noise comes from the use of machinery, tools or other equipment that are not fixed in position at a domestic premises. Typical examples of non-fixed domestic machines include lawn mowers, power tools or other similar machinery.

Non-fixed machines and power tools such as lawn mowers can emit significant levels of noise, but are generally only used for short periods of time.

As it's difficult to set a reasonable recommended assigned noise level for the use of this type of machine, the guideline recommends that non-fixed domestic machines emitting a (continuous) noise level greater than 45 dB(A) or a maximum noise level of 60 dB(A), when measured in a habitable room (see table below), must not be used outside the recommended prohibited times as covered in prohibited times table of above.

In specific cases, if the NT EPA determines that non-fixed domestic machine noise is unreasonable due to excessive duration or annoying nature, it can apply further restrictions on use during these times.

Type of noise	Recommended assigned noise level (dB(A)) – continuous	Recommended assigned noise level (dB(A)) – maximum
Chainsaws	45	60
Lawn mower	45	60
Other power tools	45	60

Note: the NT EPA may take action where it's determined that non-fixed machine and power tool noise is unreasonable due to the excessive duration or disturbing nature of the noise emitted.

Common neighbourhood noise

The following sections cover some of the most common neighbourhood noise sources that generate complaints from the community.

People noise

Noise from people yelling or screaming is best described as antisocial behaviour. As such it is something that is best handled by the Northern Territory Police Force (NT Police).

Issues of an abusive, threatening or intimidation nature are also a NT Police matter. You can contact the NT Police directly on 131 444.

Parties and loud music

Everyone loves a good party and it is part of our culture to celebrate special occasions with friends and family.

Neighbours will, in most cases, tolerate one-off parties if they have been advised in advance of the following:

- the date of the party (neighbours may wish to make alternative arrangements and go out for the evening)
- the time music will be switched off or turned down so they don't disturb neighbours after midnight (this is generally accepted by the community but it's not law)
- a legitimate phone number to ring if the music gets too loud, but remember that even if the above guidance is followed, neighbours can still lodge a complaint with the NT Police.

NT Police officers have the power to ensure music is turned down or turned off based on the undue noise test (section 5 of the Summary Offences Act 1923).

It's also recommended:

- the use of outdoor speakers be minimised

- speakers be directed away from neighbours houses
- keep bass music low
- move the party indoors if it goes late into the night
- keep windows and doors closed.

Air conditioners

The location of the air conditioner is the most important factor in making sure noise is not going to be annoying. Air conditioners should be located as far away as possible from neighbours' bedrooms and outdoor recreation areas.

Please note that relocation or reducing the noise from an air conditioner can be very expensive and inconvenient. The air conditioning industry provide an easy-to-use best practice guidelines to assist installers to determine which air conditioner is appropriate for your situation.

A copy of these guidelines is available from the Australian Institute of Refrigeration, Air Conditioning and Heating website www.airah.org.au

Barking dogs

If you have problems with noise from barking dogs please contact your local council as this matter is covered under the Local Government Act 2008 and/or local by-laws.

If the council determines there is a hazard or nuisance under the Local Government Act 2008 they can give a regulatory order to the owner to prevent the nuisance or can issue a fine for the offence. Court action is also available in some cases.

Alarms

Intruder alarms are a useful security device but can create a significant nuisance to neighbours if they are operated incorrectly, continually being triggered or are faulty.

Ideally they should sound for only five to ten minutes before shutting off. If a police officer is satisfied that the alarm has been causing undue noise, he or she may take whatever reasonable steps necessary to stop the alarm. See table 2.1 in the guideline for information on intruder alarms.

Further information

Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority

Website: <https://ntepa.nt.gov.au/your-environment/noise>

Email: pollution@nt.gov.au

Pollution hotline: 1800 064 567

General queries: 08 8924 4218 and ask for the noise regulation section.