

What to do if you have a noise problem

Solving disputes

[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.

Guidance Document One within the guideline provides a range of measures to resolve noise problems including discussion/negotiation with neighbours and mediation².

For example, if you are being affected by construction noise, you can try contacting the builder or site workers in a friendly manner. They may not realise the effect the noise is having on nearby residents.

Subject to the noise type, often the builder or site workers can immediately reduce the noise. This includes speaking more quietly, turning down radios, using quieter equipment or moving machinery away from the affected house. Also, if a neighbour is creating noise you may want to try discussing the situation with them in the first instance.

Disputes that are settled without involving a regulatory agency usually result in friendlier ongoing relationships and often provide more effective solutions.

Investigation of noise complaints

In the Northern Territory there are a number of agencies that have roles and responsibilities in the management of noise.

Table 2.1 of the guideline provides a quick reference guide as to which agency is responsible for different noise sources, and how issues may be assessed and managed.

The table lists four types of responsibilities:

- primary
- secondary
- tertiary
- shared.

Users of this guideline must always make contact with the primary responsible agency for the particular noise issue. It also includes the associated management approaches/instruments that may be used to address the issue.

If the agency with the primary responsibility does not resolve the issue, or if the agency is unable to resolve the issue, the secondary and then tertiary agencies may be contacted in that order.

Where there is a shared responsibility, each agency that has been named has equal responsibility for the noise source.

¹ https://ntepa.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/566356/noise_management_framework_guideline.pdf

² Free legal mediation services are available that can be of assistance in resolving neighbourhood noise issues. This approach also has the benefit of avoiding the costly and adversarial legal process. For further information, you can contact the Community Justice Centre or visit the website at <https://nt.gov.au/law/processes/resolving-disputes-without-going-to-court>

If noise is still bothering you after you have attempted to resolve the matter by using the 'soft' options contained in Guidance Document Number One, the first thing you need to do is locate the noise source and lodge a complaint with the primary regulator contained in table 2.1.

For example, noisy work is occurring after hours and site workers on a construction site are not willing to compromise, or where [neighbours are operating equipment](#) beyond the recommended prohibited times.

Complaint investigation

When the primary noise regulator, the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA), receives a noise complaint environmental officers will initially make contact with the alleged source. They will then inform them of the situation and requirements of the guideline.

Usually this is sufficient to resolve most situations, as quite often the source of the noise isn't aware they're creating a problem or were not aware of the Northern Territory noise requirements. If this does not resolve the matter further action will be taken.

NT EPA environmental officers follow the complaints management process contained in section 1.7 of the guideline.

Enforcement options available to the NT EPA

If the noise is found to be excessive, further action may be taken which in some cases can include, issuing a pollution abatement notice, authorised officer direction and/or penalty infringement notice.

Should enforcement action be taken, complainants may be called upon as a witness in court. Penalties may also be applied in circumstances where a person refuses to comply with the direction of an authorised officer or if they provide a false report about a noise matter.

Legal action is never the preferred option. Resolving a noise issue through consensus and cooperation is the most desirable outcome.

Further information

Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority

Website: <https://ntepa.nt.gov.au/waste-pollution/guidelines>

Email: pollution@nt.gov.au

Pollution hotline: 1800 064 567

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