
From the Ministries

NOISE IN SWITZERLAND STILL A PROBLEM

A new report from Switzerland's Federal Office for the Environment confirms that noise pollution and its

impact on people's health remains a problem in Switzerland. The report says that road traffic noise disrupts 1.3 million people during the day, and more than 900,000 at night.

NOISE IN HONG KONG

In 2013, over 6,000 noise complaints were made in Hong Kong, second only to the more than 13,000 complaints about air pollution. A joint survey by the Environmental Protection Department and Chinese University

found that about 11 per cent and 8 per cent of the Hong Kong adult population felt "highly annoyed" by renovation noise and traffic noise respectively, the latter being the primary cause of sleep disturbance.

NOISE CHECK ON HOMES RECOMMENDED

Homes which are for sale should be required to include a report on noise insulation, a leading French health authority has recommended. The Académie Nationale de Médecine says not enough is done by property developers to protect residents from unwelcome noises - whether it is loud neighbours and traffic in an urban apartment block or dogs barking and aircraft in a rural environment. It also says local authorities should improve their handling of noise problems, setting up dedicated offices to respond promptly to complaints. The recommendations come after a study by the noise watchdog CIDB in 2010 found

35% of people had trouble sleeping because of noise and a quarter of respondents were suffering from stress or anxiety as a result of sound pollution. Just under 10% said the noise had made them depressed and prompted them to take medication. The Académie says there has been a wide range of new property regulations in recent years (on energy efficiency, for example) but noise is frequently ignored. The report continues: "Noise often falls down the priority list, but it has a major health impact." It calls for better awareness among architects and builders, a kitemark scheme for building firms who are best qualified in this area and an acoustic performance report when a house is sold.

COPYING THE 'NEVER-ENFORCED' ORDINANCE

Stonington's (MA) Board of Police Commissioners is exploring a possible noise ordinance for the town. Commissioners took a first look at the proposal at their August meeting, and plan to question the town attorney, Thomas Londregan, who drafted the ordinance. The ordinance, drafted by Londregan, is loosely based on a noise ordinance in the town of East Lyme.

What seemed to concern commissioners the most was whether or not the ordinance could be enforced. Several commissioners noted that there was no point in passing an ordinance that cannot be enforced. When commissioners at August's meeting asked police Chief J. Darren Stewart how East Lyme enforces its ordinance, Stewart said it's not. "They never, ever enforced it," he told the board.

SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL NEW NOISE-ON-BOATS ORDINANCE

Residents near Seattle's Seward Park say noise pollution from anchored boats is getting to be too much, and they've asked the City Council to do something about it. The music is loud enough that residents often call police and city agencies to complain, and the issue now has the attention of the Seattle City Council. "It's a fairly modest action that we're taking," said Councilman Richard Conlin. "Nobody wants to stop boating, nobody wants to stop people from

having parties. Just turn the music down when it's getting too loud." Under the current watercraft ordinance, Seattle Harbor Patrol cannot properly respond to noise complaints because there's no code that addresses audio equipment on boats. "Yeah, there's definitely times when you have, like, five boats rafting up together and they've all got it on the same radio station," said boater Dan Donovan. The new proposal expands the noise ordinance to include audio systems and would require a noise meter reading before a citation could be issued.

LONG BEACH TO LOOK INTO LIMITING ICE CREAM TRUCK NOISE

Long Beach councilman Dee Andrews wants to regulate the noise of ice cream trucks with an item he'll introduce at a forthcoming meeting. The resolution would direct the City Attorney's Office to devise an amendment to Long Beach's municipal code that requires ice cream vans to comply with the city's noise ordinance and not play amplified music while vehicles are parked and dispensing their products. Andrews advanced the legislation after his office received numerous complaints over a

period of years about ice cream truck noise in his Central Long Beach district. Deputy City Attorney Amy Webber said other California cities such as Santa Clara, Santa Ana, Fullerton and Anaheim have passed laws clamping down on ice cream truck music. In the 1990s, Costa Mesa banned amplified music by ice cream trucks entirely. According to Webber, Andrews' proposal simply attaches noise abatement to a vendor's business license. "I think the idea would be to make it a condition of operation that they comply with the noise ordinance," Webber said.

RUBBER ROADS REDUCE TRAFFIC NOISE

Recycled car tyres could soon be used to surface roads in the UK after a pioneering trial found they made roads quieter. One of the busiest roads in Scotland was resurfaced in 2012 with asphalt containing shredded rubber from old tyres. Tests were performed on grip and skid resistance, with engineers reporting that the rubber road, on a stretch of dual carriageway between Perth and Dundee, resulted in a quieter drive. The surface is also more environmentally friendly. Since 2006 EU rules have banned the disposal of tyres in landfill sites, leaving about 480 000 tonnes of recyclable shredded rubber each year. Experts claim the road requires less maintenance and still allows for drainage, while tyre recyclers claim the technique will also save money because the new material is thinner than standard roads. Rubber roads were first built in the 1960s in the US, where today there are 20,000 miles of road made of recycled tyres. The technique has since been found to cut traffic noise by about 25 per cent. The asphalt is made by breaking down used tyres into rubber 'crumbs' which are added to bitumen and crushed stone, which are typically used to make asphalt. Experts say it makes roads quieter because the rubber thickens the bitumen - the binding agent which keeps the crushed stones together - which allows the road surface to trap and disperse sound waves. The rubber material is also springy and absorbs sound.

TREES PLANTED TO HUSH PIPELINE PUMP NOISE

A Canadian pipeline company is planting more than 100 mature spruce trees around a pump station in North Dakota to help hush noise at the facility and reduce complaints from nearby residents. Calgary-based TransCanada Corp. said the tree-planting project began this week along the Keystone pipeline near Fort Ransom, a town of about 80 people, 60 miles southwest of Fargo. The Keystone has been operating for three years and transports crude oil from tar sands near Hardisty, Alberta, across Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and through North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, on the way to refineries at Patoka, Illinois and Cushing, Oklahoma. The Keystone pump station that contains four, 5,000-horsepower electric turbines has been operating lower than the permitted 55-decibel level since it came on line, according to the company and state regulators. But Bruce Pantzke, who owns a farm less than a mile from the Keystone pump station, said it emits a sound that's like "fingernails on a chalkboard." Not all sound is the same, he said. "There is a lot of difference between 55 decibels of soothing elevator music and the whine off those turbines," he said. Pantzke said there are 18 homes within three miles of the pump station. The facility also is within a few miles of two state parks. "It's not something you grow used to and you can't sleep with the windows open when that thing is going," Pantzke said of the high-pitched whine from the turbines. "A lot of the neighbors are getting more irritated and sensitive to it every day." "We are doing everything we can reasonably do - there is never going to be absolute quiet," said Shawn Howard, a TransCanada spokesman in Calgary. "To completely enclose one site would cost millions of dollars that would be passed along to the cost of the product we transport."

SYDNEY AIRPORT NOISE WILL INCREASE, SAYS FORUM

Residents as far north as Hornsby and as far south as Sutherland can expect a greater share of Sydney's aircraft noise in the next two decades, Sydney Airport Community Forum says. It says the airport's forecast of 74 million passengers by 2033 will make noise-sharing arrangements impossible. The airport's draft master plan, released on June 5, also details how it plans to ameliorate road congestion beyond the next 20 years, such as through reconfigured roads and integrated terminals. Sydney Airport chief executive Kerrie Mather has said the measures will ensure it meets demand "well beyond" 2033 despite no change to the cap, curfew or runways. The plan predicts the airport's noise footprint in 2033 will resemble that of 2011 because of larger and quieter planes, such as the A380. But the forum's chairman, Peter Fitzgerald, said a 50 per cent increase in the number of planes needed to cope with a doubling of passenger numbers by 2033 would force the airport to hit its peak more often. Its cap of 80 flights an hour would be met by using the two parallel north-south runways during this period. "Which means the people in the north-south get more, and the people in the east-west get less," he said. The airport argues that plane movements will increase by just 27 per cent over the next 20 years, and there will be little change to noise-sharing arrangements. But Mr Fitzgerald's concerns were echoed by No Aircraft Noise party president Allan Rees, who said a recent scoping study for Wilton found all peak hour slots at Sydney would be allocated within the next two years. "Sydney Airport Corporation is just pretending that they can provide for future growth in order to protect their monopoly profits," he said. Mr Rees said the busiest two hours of the day were reaching 85 per cent capacity, leading to delays that stretched to midday. "We have no confidence in the airport's noise predictions after they got the forecast wrong in the last master plan and had to release a second prediction showing more noise," he said.

MINE NOISE AFFECTING SLEEP

An Upper Hunter (NSW, Australia) community group has complained blasting and noise limits for mines are set so high that it is virtually impossible for them to breach their consent conditions. It follows Department of Planning monitoring at a Bulga mine in February after residents complained about the mine's activities. The mine has been the subject of ongoing complaints. The department's monitoring results were consistent with the mine's real-time monitoring systems, which indicated the mine complied with its noise limits. "The complainants were advised of the outcome and the department's compliance team will be conducting further noise monitoring of its own," the department's monthly compliance report said. But Hunter Communities Network spokeswoman Bev Smiles said the existing conditions of approval for many mines were not in accordance with community health impacts, such as sleep deprivation. "A quiet rural area usually has a background noise level of between 18 to 22 decibels, whereas the industrial noise policy has a starting background noise level of 30 decibels and mines are allowed to produce up to 35 decibels," she said. "On a cold winter's night that noise will travel even further." The group wants a study into the health impacts of mine noise on Upper Hunter communities. "Most of the people who complain can't sleep at night and that, in turn, leads to other health effects," Ms Smiles said.

TEENAGERS' TV CONFISCATED OVER NOISE DISRUPTION

Two teenagers in Lincoln had their TV and DVD player removed by the City Council after a number of noise complaints. The set was confiscated at by the council's public protection and anti-social behaviour team and Lincolnshire Police, where a warrant was executed under the Environmental Protection Act. Due to the warrant, the team was able to remove a number of electrical goods that could have led to the noise complaints by neighbours. Neighbours complained about loud music initially during the day and in the early hours of the morning, so the council gave the resident sound recording equipment to track the noise. Police had also been called to the property to stop the noise, but the music continued. Sam Barstow, Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour Service Manager, said: "If people are causing a noise nuisance we will take action. "This first came to our attention two months ago, and in that time we have gathered evidence, got a warrant and removed the items causing a nuisance.