

NOISE DISTURBANCES

BACKGROUND

In 1974 the Washington State Legislature adopted legislation found in chapter 70.107 RCW addressing noise. In adopting the legislation, the Legislature found that inadequately controlled noise adversely affects the health, safety and welfare of the people, the value of property and the quality of the environment. The Legislature charged the Washington State Department of Ecology with adopting maximum noise levels permissible in identifiable environments. Consistent with the legislature's directive, the Department of Ecology adopted chapter 173-60 WAC. That WAC establishes maximum noise levels in permissible environments. The WAC regulation is enforceable by the Department of Ecology.

The state legislation also provided that local governments could impose limits or control sources of noise differing from the noise levels adopted by the Department of Ecology.

Consistent with the state law, Spokane County adopted an ordinance regulating noise disturbances in the **unincorporated** areas of Spokane County. It is found in [chapter 6.12 of the Spokane County Code](#). The Spokane County Sheriff's Office enforces Spokane County's noise disturbance ordinance **only** in the unincorporated areas of Spokane County. Cities and Towns have the same authority as Spokane County to adopt their own noise disturbance ordinances. Their ordinances are enforced by their respective code enforcement officers or law enforcement agencies not the Spokane County Sheriff.

SPOKANE COUNTY'S NOISE DISTURBANCE ORDINANCE

WHAT IS A NOISE DISTURBANCE

A noise disturbance under the County's Ordinance is generally defined as is any sound emitted frequently, repetitively, or continuously from any building, house, or property located within a residential area of unincorporated Spokane County that annoy or disturb residents' comfortable enjoyment of their property. Noise disturbances can be created by a radio, television, musical instruments, speakers, or any other device capable of producing sound.

While barking dogs may be a noise disturbance, barking dogs are handled by the Spokane Regional Animal Protection Services (SCRAPS) not by Spokane County Sheriff's Office as a noise disturbance. SCRAPS should be contacted for any complaints regarding barking dogs at (509) 477-2532 or by filing an [online complaint](#).

Those individuals creating a noise disturbance or allowing one to occur on their property can be issued a ticket of fifty dollars (\$50) a day by the Spokane County Sheriff's Office or charged with a criminal misdemeanor, which carries a penalty of up to ninety (90) days in jail or a fine of one thousand dollars (\$1000) or both. SCC 6.12.030 & 6.12.040.

WHAT IS NOT A NOISE DISTURBANCE

There are some noises that can exist within unincorporated Spokane County that may be considered to some to be noise disturbances, but are not classified as noise disturbances under the County's Ordinance.

The following sources of noise are **not** considered to be noise disturbances **at all hours of the day or night:**

- Noncommercial public speaking or public assembly conducted on any public space or street for which a permit has been obtained
- The normal operation of cars, trucks, buses, airplanes, helicopters, and trains, including sounds from authorized racing events
- Warning devices not operating continuously for more than five minutes
- Bells, chimes, or carillons
- Safety and protective devices
- Sounds from law enforcement, fire departments, or ambulances
- Officially sanctioned parades or other public events
- Petroleum refinery boilers during startup procedures, natural gas transmissions and distribution facilities
- Boats and other watercraft, except as provided by Spokane County Code, Chapter 6.03
- Gun fire, in the course of lawful hunting
- Vehicles being driven Off Road, unless on or adjacent to residential property
- Public work projects or public work maintenance
- Collection of garbage, recycling, and yard waste
- Military operations or training
- Sounds from public parks, playgrounds, gymnasiums, swimming pools, and other public recreational facilities during hours of operation
- Farming related activities

The following sources of noise are **not** considered to be noise **disturbances between the hours of seven a.m. and ten p.m.:**

- Residential temporary projects for repair or maintenance of homes, grounds and appurtenances
- Gun fire from authorized shooting ranges
- Blasting, otherwise lawfully conducted
- Aircraft engine testing and maintenance
- Installation or repair of essential utility services

The following sources of noise are not considered to be noise disturbances between the hours of **seven a.m. and ten p.m. or when more than one thousand (1000) feet from any residence:**

- Temporary construction sites
- Forest harvesting and silvicultural activities
- Quarrying, blasting, or mining and primary reduction and processing of concrete, asphalt, and rock crushing
- Any uses of properties which have been specifically conditioned to meet noise requirements set by the Spokane County Hearing Examiner

HOW TO DOCUMENT A NOISE DISTURBANCE

Due to the variable nature of noise disturbances; it is difficult for law enforcement officers to document noise disturbances that are not occurring in the officer's presence. However, there are steps that can be taken by those affected by noise disturbances to document the disturbance and aid law enforcement in addressing the noise disturbance. They include:

- Keeping a log of the dates, times, and duration when the noise disturbance is occurring
- Recording the noise disturbance from your residence via video and/or audio
- Speaking with other neighbors in the area and find out if they are affected by the noise disturbance and are willing to sign statements to that effect
- Continually report noise disturbances to the Spokane County Sheriff's Office

HOW TO REPORT A NOISE DISTURBANCE

- If the noise disturbance is occurring or continually on going contact the Spokane County Sheriff's Office by calling Crime Check at 456-2233.
- If the noise disturbance is not currently occurring please contact the Spokane County Sheriff's Office by calling Crime Check at 456-2233 or by filing an [online report](#).