

# Noise Program

## Supporting Businesses As They Reopen



Many businesses have been prioritizing the health of their employees and customers by offering alternative outdoor experiences. These new changes may cause neighbors to hear more noise during operating hours. To help businesses run successfully and maintain goodwill with neighbors, we want to provide important information about the City of Portland's noise code.

### What Is The Noise Code?

During COVID-19, the Noise Program received double the amount of noise complaints and the office continues to see an increase of complaints as more businesses reopen. Why? More people have adapted to working, studying and being at home. As a result, many residents have grown familiar with quieter streets and have forgotten that Portland's "buzz" is what initially drew many of us to this beloved city.

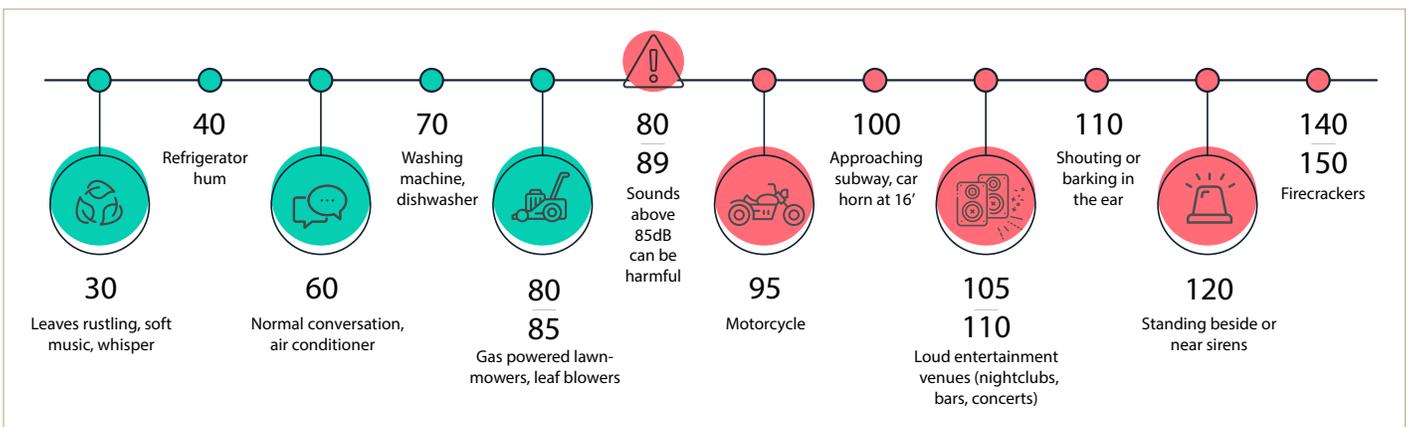
We want to ensure that your business is able to offer customers alternative outdoor dining or entertainment experiences without violating Portland's Noise Code.

The City of Portland's Title 18 Noise Code defines a noise disturbance as any sound which: "(a) injures or endangers the safety or health of humans; or (b) annoys or disturbs a reasonable person of normal sensitivities." However, unamplified human voices are considered part of free speech, and not within the jurisdiction of Title 18.

The Noise office encourages residents to first talk to businesses about concerns with noise. However, sometimes residents submit an online noise complaint or direct their complaints into the mayor's or commissioners' offices as their first step.

### What Is Acceptable?

The image below illustrates Common Sources of Noise and Decibel Levels per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This illustration can help concerned parties identify the level of noise they are experiencing:



The illustration offers guidance when talking about noise, in order to determine if there is a noise violation. The Noise office scientifically measures decibel levels set by the zoning of where the noise is coming from, as it is heard and measured with a noise meter at a separate property where the noise is heard. The noise code specifies that measurements be made with a sound level meter, and that the meter shall be an instrument in good operating condition, meeting the requirements of a Type I or Type II meter, as specified by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Standard 1.4 1971.

If a constituent would like to determine if a noise violation exists, the Noise team can provide a meter. The meters are available for a refundable deposit at \$60 and can be used for up to two weeks. These meters are helpful to establish a baseline sound reading and can be used to initiate a follow-up investigation by our office. Meters of this type are also widely

available in the retail market at a relatively low cost. Please contact our office to determine which devices are appropriate or to loan.

If your business generates noise on a regular basis it may be necessary to obtain a sound level meter or to hire an acoustical professional to ensure compliance with the City's noise code.

Please note that we cannot discuss sound readings taken with cell phones apps, video or multi-meters as their level of accuracy are not reliable.

### What Happens When A Complaint is Filed?

First, the tenant and property owner will receive a warning that a complaint has been filed. Most noise complaints are resolved immediately by proactive business owners and venues at this point, as they may not have known the impact their noise had on neighbors.

When a noise complaint is not mitigated by the sound producing event or business, the code uses additional enforcement tools—including citations, civil penalties, liens and fines—to prevent violations from continuing. Citations may be issued by any police officer and/or the noise officer. Title 18.10.010 stipulates that the first commercial violation fine begins at \$300, the second is \$1,000, third is \$3,000 and each subsequent is a \$5,000 fine per violation.

### Useful Website Links

A top priority for the City of Portland is to support businesses and events as they begin to ease their pandemic restrictions. Below you will find a list of useful links and the appropriate way to contact the Noise team with questions or concerns.

Learn more about the Noise Program: [portland.gov/civic/noise](http://portland.gov/civic/noise)

Apply for a noise variance: [portland.gov/civic/noisereview/apply-noise-variance](http://portland.gov/civic/noisereview/apply-noise-variance)

Title 18 Noise Code: [portland.gov/civic/noisereview/noise-code-enforcement](http://portland.gov/civic/noisereview/noise-code-enforcement)

List of permissible sound levels: [portland.gov/civic/noise/noise-concerns](http://portland.gov/civic/noise/noise-concerns)

Submit a noise complaint: [portland.gov/civic/noise/noise-concerns](http://portland.gov/civic/noise/noise-concerns)

Determine zoning: [portlandmaps.com](http://portlandmaps.com)



As businesses begin to reopen, they are thinking of ways to transform their business so that it is safe for its employees and customers. These changes, such as outdoor seating, may increase the noise volume.

### Contact Us

The Noise office is committed to helping Portlanders address noise before it becomes an issue. If you have any questions that you want addressed, please don't hesitate to reach out to our office:

[noise@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:noise@portlandoregon.gov) or at 503-823-7350



Promote the Common Good: The Office of Community & Civic Life is building stronger communities by supporting and empowering Portlanders. We think, act, and partner with our communities to better understand and take care of their diverse needs. We invite you to join us in this continuous, much needed work to make our communities safer and more welcoming for all.