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Construction Site Noise

A Guide for Contractors

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West Lothian
Council

Environmental Health and
Trading Standards Unit

Introduction

Building and construction work are an essential part of the growth and development of West Lothian. Unfortunately the noise and disruption that occurs alongside construction sites can cause problems to neighbouring residents and occupiers of other noise-sensitive premises e.g. Schools, Hospitals etc.

This leaflet provides useful advice for contractors on how to minimise disruption and noise and avoid conflicts with local residents.

Code of Practice

If you are undertaking construction work in West Lothian, it is recommended that you notify local residents of any work that will be carried out. This applies to all building work, demolition works and road works. The notification should include:

- An honest description of the work to be carried out and the amount of disturbance anticipated.
- All steps that the contractor has taken to minimise disturbance.
- The time and duration of the work. This should be strictly adhered to so that credibility with local residents is maintained.

More information can be found in the Code of Practice for Construction (BS 5228).

Common causes for complaint

Every site is unique and presents its own problems, but there are a number of common complaints that can lead to conflict between contractors and neighbours. These include:

- Running generators unnecessarily.
- Siting generators or pumps near to noise-sensitive premises when they can be located in a more distant or shielded part of the site.
- Organising deliveries to arrive at the site before the start of the working day.
- Allowing vehicles to sit with their engines running.
- Blaming sub-contractors instead of managing them.
- Saying one thing and doing another.
- Carrying out noisy work during anti-social hours.

Avoiding these will help maintain good relations with your neighbours.

Neighbouring commercial activities may also be affected by your operations in that meetings and telephone conversation can become difficult or impossible. Early discussions with such neighbours will minimise conflict and avoid actions for compensation.

Occasionally, conflicts between contractors and neighbours will arise. In such cases, Environmental Health may intervene. In the first instance the situation is usually dealt with informally, allowing an attempt to be made to remedy the problem without using formal restrictions. Where disturbance is caused, immediate formal action will be taken.

Restrictions

If informal attempts at resolving conflicts are not successful then Environmental Health will use its powers under the **Control of Pollution Act 1974** to impose restrictions on working hours, plant or machinery which can be used and in some cases noise levels.

Time restrictions - this is the most common form of restriction to be placed upon a site and is likely to restrict site operations (including deliveries) to 07.00 – 19.00 Monday to Friday and 08.00 – 13.00 on a Saturday so that no noise is audible at the site boundary (or within dwellings where work is being undertaken on occupied dwellings) outwith these times. There may be more onerous restrictions on particularly noisy operations e.g. hammer piling. Under normal circumstances, evening, night-time and Sunday working **will not** be considered reasonable. There may be exceptions to this, for example, for reasons of public safety and/or Police requirements. In such cases contractors need to demonstrate that other authorities require the work to take place at these times.

Plant and machinery restrictions - certain items of plant or machinery may be considered inappropriate for the works being undertaken and therefore prohibited from use.

Noise limits – these are measured 1m from the façade of any affected noise-sensitive premises. Noise affecting residential premises is likely to be restricted to a maximum $L_{Aeq(12 \text{ hour})}$ of 75 dB depending on the pre construction ambient environment. Different restrictions may apply, eg shorter term (1 hour/3 hour) L_{Aeq} period limits and/or an LA_{max} , L_{A01} limit, depending on the nature of the works being undertaken and their effect on neighbouring premises.