

Pumps

Noise from pumps can disturb neighbours, disrupt their sleep and interfere with normal daily activities. If loud enough, it can also affect their health. Council receives numerous complaints about noise from pumps each year. Most complaints concern pumps operating late at night. This fact sheet can help you to reduce noise and meet legal requirements.

Be a good neighbour

Talk to neighbours. Find out what concerns they may have before installing equipment and seek suggestions about solving any problems. Solutions can often be found that satisfy everyone.

The law

Queensland's *Environmental Protection Act 1994* includes noise limits for pumps and Council is legally required to enforce these limits. If issues between neighbours cannot be resolved and further complaints are made, Council will investigate. If a pump exceeds noise limits, Council may issue the owner or operator with fines to the value of 15 penalty units (individual) or 75 penalty units (corporation). Refer to the Local Government Toolbox website www.lgtoolbox.qld.gov.au for more information about penalty units.

Allowable noise limits

If noise from a pump exceeds the following levels when measured at a neighbouring premises, the owner may be issued with a fine:

- 7am to 7pm where noise is more than five decibels above the background noise level
- 7pm to 10pm where noise is more than three decibels above the background noise level
- 10pm to 7am where noise can be clearly heard.

Background noise is that measured in the absence of the problem noise.

Ways to reduce noise

A range of measures can be used to reduce noise impacts from a pump. These include:

Limit hours of use

Find out if there are particular times when the pump disturbs neighbours. Most people are concerned about noise at night. Depending on the pump's use, consider a timer to ensure it operates at appropriate times.

If it's a swimming pool pump

Know how long the pool filter needs to run for acceptable water quality. In most cases, this is only necessary to allow pool water to turn over once or twice a day. For an average pool, run the pump for three to six hours per day. Make sure the required maintenance measures are carried out, such as chlorination and pH adjustment. Talk to the local pool shop or pool pump manufacturer for information.

Select a quieter pump

Older units can be noisy and an undersized pump may need to run longer to maintain pool water quality. Replacing the pump with a quieter or appropriately-sized model may help solve the problem.

Choose location carefully

Locate the pump as far away as possible from neighbours and away from sensitive areas, such as bedroom windows and offices. When installing a pump, ask the installer for advice. Avoid noise-reflective surfaces, such as walls or alcoves.

Regular maintenance

Lack of maintenance can cause higher noise levels and reduce the effectiveness of the pump. For pool pumps, keep the filter clean and contact the manufacturer or installer for advice.

Install fences or barriers

A solid fence without gaps can help reduce noise levels.

Consider an acoustic enclosure

Consider enclosing the unit in a ventilated wooden box with an absorbent lining. Contact the manufacturer or installer for advice.

Modifications to the motor or pump unit

Sometimes modifications can be made to the unit to reduce noise. Discuss this option with the manufacturer or installer.

For more information on this topic, contact your local Council.