

## About Noise Complaints

The Seattle Police Department receives hundreds of noise complaints every year. Seattle is a large city with many diverse neighborhoods, both residential and commercial, so a certain level of tolerance is expected. Certain types of noise are permitted outright.

If the noise is illegal as defined in this brochure, police may intervene. We suggest that you first try contacting the people responsible for the noise. Often times, they are not aware of the discomfort they are causing. If you feel uneasy about direct contact or the person has been uncooperative or is “under the influence,” you can call 911 for assistance.

# AVOIDING

# NOISE

Produced by:



**Seattle Police Department**

610 5th Avenue

P.O. Box 34986

Seattle, WA 98124-4986

[www.seattle.gov/police/prevention/noise](http://www.seattle.gov/police/prevention/noise)

**Your Guide to Noise Laws  
in the City of Seattle**

# ILLEGAL NOISE

## **Residential Disturbance Ordinance** **Seattle Municipal Code 25.08.505:**

It is unlawful for any person to knowingly allow real property under one's possession or control to be used for a residential disturbance, as defined in SMC Section 25.08.225



## **Seattle Municipal Code 25.08.225:**

"Residential disturbance" means a gathering of more than one (1) person at a residential property located in a single family or multifamily zone, as defined SMC Section 23.84.048 between the hours of 10:00 P.M., (11:00 P.M. on Friday and Saturday nights) and 7:00 A.M., at which noise associated with the gathering is frequent, repetitive or continuous and is audible to a person of normal hearing at a distance of seventy-five (75) feet or more from the property.

**Penalties:** Officers may issue a civil infraction (citation) on the spot. The fine for the infraction is \$250. A person who continues to be in violation of this ordinance after receiving an infraction or who again violates this ordinance within 24 hours of receiving an infraction, can be charged with a crime. If found guilty, a judge may impose a maximum sentence of up to 180 days incarceration in jail, and/or a fine up to \$500.

In addition to criminal penalties, the property owner is notified when a tenant or other person has received more than one citation. A residential property at which 3 or more violations have occurred within a 12-month period may constitute a nuisance and be subjected to an abatement action provided that the person(s)

responsible for the violation were residents of the same housing unit during this time. If the property owner does not take action to evict the tenant responsible for the 3 violations or otherwise abate further violations, the court may prohibit the property owner from renting the property.

**Note:** The offending noise must emanate from a residentially zoned property. This code section does not cover noise from commercial establishments, even though the victim lives in a residentially zoned property. This ordinance does not require that the offender be given a warning or that you be contacted by a police officer or be identified on the citation.

## **Unreasonable Noises**

### **Seattle Municipal Code 25.08.500:**

It is unlawful to knowingly cause, make or allow unreasonable noise to emanate from property under ones control, which disturbs another, and to refuse or intentionally fail to cease the unreasonable noise when ordered to do so by a police officer. "Unreasonable noise" includes loud, raucous, frequent, repetitive, or continuous sounds made by: animals; horns or sirens other than emergency equipment, motor vehicles being repaired, tested, etc: musical instruments or sound

**Please remember that noise complaints are not a high priority for police dispatch particularly on busy weekend nights when calls involving violent disturbances are more frequent. As a result, sometimes the noise ends before police are able to respond. Officers often issue verbal warnings to the offending parties especially if they are cooperative and the officer is confident that the noise will stop as a result of police contact. Solving chronic noise problems, however, can be a process requiring multiple calls to police over a period of time.**

amplifiers; human voices, amplified, between the hours of 10:00 P.M. & 7:00 A.M.

**Penalties:** A violation of this section is a crime. Upon conviction, a judge may impose a maximum penalty of up to 180 days incarceration in jail, and/or up to \$500 fine for violation of this code.

**Note:** This ordinance requires that officers first provide a warning to the offender. If the noise continues, you must be willing to call police again; 911 to report the violation and request contact. You must be willing to allow the officer to verify the noise is unreasonable from your premises and you must be willing to be identified on a police report. You may be required to testify in any resulting criminal case.

## **Vehicle Noises**

### **Seattle Municipal Code 25.08.515:**

Sound from motor vehicle sound system clearly heard at a distance of 75 feet from where it is originating.

**Penalty:** A violation of this ordinance is a civil infraction, punishable by a maximum fine of \$500.

## **Noise in Parks and Public Places**

### **Seattle Municipal Code 25.08.515:**

It is unlawful for a person to allow sound to be generated from portable audio equipment such as a "boom box" or from an automobile sound system if it can clearly be heard at a distance of 75 feet from the source of the sound, while in a park, residential or commercial zone, or within close proximity to a school or bus.

**Penalty:** A violation of this code is also a civil infraction punishable by a maximum fine of \$50.