

Preserving Peace and Quiet in the Town

Quiet hours to limit noise from landscape and construction sources in the early morning and evening hours have been instituted by a new Town ordinance. The Town's quiet hours would supplement Montgomery County's existing noise limits for residential areas, which continue to apply to all activities in the Town. The Environment Committee joins the Town Council and staff in encouraging residents to not only observe Town and County noise measures, but put some extra effort into being truly courteous and considerate of neighbors. Here are some things we have learned in studying residential noise and some suggestions for minimizing the impact of noise generated by landscape and construction work.

Landscape Care. A variety of power equipment is routinely used in the Town to keep outdoor areas neat. Most noise complaints from residents relate to two types of equipment, leaf blowers and mowers, particularly when multiple pieces are used simultaneously by lawn care crews.

Leaf Blowers. Manufacturers provide guidelines for safer and quieter use of leaf blowers that emphasize proper use and maintenance. These tips from manufacturers will help reduce noise:

- Use the lowest possible throttle speed to do the job
- Use nozzle attachments that help reduce sound (see operator's manual)
- Use only one blower at a time, especially in neighborhoods;
- Regularly check condition of the leaf blower muffler, air intakes and air filter;
- Purchase and use sound-reduced blowers. Blowers are now available that are as much as 75% quieter than older blowers.

Lawn Mowers. Today's electric-powered equipment (many are cordless) tends to be 10-20 decibels quieter than gas mowers (one half to one fourth as loud). Recharging an electric mower may total \$3-\$5 per year, plus, no gas cans and no walking in the exhaust stream of an internal combustion engine. This is a smart and courteous alternative when it's time to replace older equipment.

Construction Noise. The County has established "reasonable and practical controls" to minimize construction noise levels and balance the interest of all concerned. With planning, many construction activities can be (and routinely are) conducted without exceeding the County's daytime residential noise limits. The Town has a pre-permit meeting just to give neighbors a chance to raise these kinds of issues at the outset. Share these tips from the County for reducing construction noise with owners and contractors:

- Incorporate noise control into project planning and work scheduling, For example. schedule noise intense activities for less intrusive times, such as mid-morning to mid-afternoon;
- Purchase a sound level meter for self-monitoring and documentation;
- "Work quiet" and communicate to subs that noise control is important to the job;
- Buy quiet and rent quiet. Most manufacturers provide noise emission specs;
- Use proper, well-maintained mufflers; close doors and hatches; operate at the minimum necessary level (also saves fuel); and shut down equipment not in use;
- Let surrounding residents know what is happening and when it will be over;
- Construct portable barriers around noisy, non-mobile equipment with readily available materials (e.g. plywood with sound absorbing material);
- Use alternatives to factory pre-set back-up beepers, such as flag persons, "Smart Alarms" or video systems.

General Noise Courtesy Among Neighbors:

For those who want to make a special effort on behalf of their neighbors, the County has these general tips:"

- Monitor volume of televisions, stereos and radios (especially bass controls) during quiet hours;
- Check central and window air conditioning and heating units to ensure they are operating as quietly as possible;
- Take good care of pets and be aware of barking that could disturb neighbors;
- Make sure your service vendors know about and observe quiet hours and general residential noise limits;
- Buy quiet when selecting equipment and appliances

Find more information about noise reduction, buying guides for landscape equipment, and links to County noise materials on the Town website at Quick Links: Noise Control. And encourage your lawn care service to send a representative to the Town's Noise Awareness meeting to be scheduled soon. Together, let's keep our town a peaceful place to live.