

PRESS NOTE

AMENDMENT To 'NOISE POLLUTION (REGULATION AND CONTROL) RULES, 2000' AND SETTING UP OF A 'NATIONAL NOISE MONITORING NETWORK'

New Delhi, 14th January, 2010

Noise, by definition, is unwanted sound. What is pleasant to some ears may be extremely unpleasant to others, depending on a number of factors. The natural environmental contains many sources of noise-wind, volcanoes, oceans, and animal sounds are all familiar intrusions accepted at various levels. Man-made noises – such as those from machines, automobiles, trains, planes, explosives public address system, music system, and firecrackers are more contentious.

The direct physiological effects include a loss of hearing, either temporary or permanent. The non-auditory effects include cardiac ailments, stress and fatigue, and sleep disturbances. Among the psychological effects documented by experts are a lack of concentration, loss of memory and an adverse impact on the education of children. Noise is also suspected of aggravating nausea, headache, insomnia and a loss of appetite.

NOISE REGULATION

The Environment (Protection) Act of 1986 (EPA) recognizes noise as an environmental pollutant and empowers the Central Government to frame rules prescribing the maximum permissible limits for noise in different areas. On 14th February, 2000, the Central Government notified the Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000. Two types of noise standards are prescribed: ambient air quality standards in respect of noise and emission limits for designated types of machinery, appliances and fire crackers.

The emission equipment standards prescribed in Schedule VI of the Environment (Protection) Rules of 1986 relate to motor vehicles, air conditioner, refrigerator, diesel generators and certain types of construction equipments.

The Noise Regulation Rules, 2000 regulate noise levels in industrial, (75 decibels) commercial (65 decibels) and residential zones (55 decibels), and also establish zones of silence (100 meters) near schools, courts, hospitals, etc. Separate ambient levels are fixed for industrial, commercial and residential areas and silence zones. The prescribed day time levels (6.00 AM to 10.00 PM) are typically ten decibels higher than the corresponding levels for night time except in industrial areas, where the difference is five decibels.

The Noise Rules require the States to designate an authority or officer responsible for maintaining the ambient standards. The designated authority could be the district magistrate or police commissioner or any other official. The designated authority is also empowered to issue directions to prohibit or control noise pollution. Any person violating the Rules is liable to be prosecuted under the provisions of the EPA.

RECENT AMENDMENTS TO NOISE RULES

Through the present amendment, dated 11.01.2010, the following issues have been addressed:

1. Stress has been laid on making the night peaceful. The 'night time' has been defined (10.00 pm to 6.00 am) and restrictions have been imposed on the use of horns, sound emitting construction equipments and bursting of fire crackers during night time.
2. 'Public place' has been defined and the occupant of a public place has to restrict the volume of public address system, etc so that the noise emitting from its activity would not exceed the noise limit more than 10 dB (A).
3. Similarly, the occupant of a private place has to restrict the volume of music system, etc so that the noise emitting from its activity would not exceed the noise limit by more than 5 dB (A).
4. A duty has been cast upon the concerned State Governments to specify in advance, the number and particulars of days, not exceeding fifteen in a year, on which 2 hours exemption (10.00 pm to 12.00 midnight) would be operative. State would be the unit for such an exemption.
5. These amendments are in line with the Supreme Court orders from time to time.

NATIONAL AMBIENT NOISE MONITORING NETWORK

Till now, Central and State Pollution Control Boards have been carrying out sporadic or isolated noise monitoring in urban areas. However there is no systematic national level monitoring and reporting network in the country as available in case of air and water pollution. A National Ambient Noise Monitoring Network on the pattern of existing Air and Water Networks is proposed to be created in the country and a Road Map has been prepared.

The objective of this Road Map is to facilitate setting up of a systematic national level noise monitoring network in a time bound manner. The network will result in creation of base line data and facilitate its analysis for policy makers and implementing agencies to take appropriate actions for noise control at regional and national level.

The development of noise monitoring protocol and the setting up of the noise monitoring stations on a pilot basis in seven cities (Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Lucknow) shall take about seven months. From September 2010, noise monitoring shall be started in these seven cities with 10 stations in each city. The network shall be extended to additional eighteen cities in 2011 with 5 stations in each city. The setting up of network and development of infrastructure for noise mapping in the country is expected to be in place within five years. In the first phase a total of 160 stations in 25 cities shall be established in the balance period of 2 years of the current Five Year Plan. This is estimated to cost roughly Rs. 10 crores.
