CITY OF SEQUIM

FACT SHEET

Noise Control

SUMMARY

Noise impacts the quality of life in a city. Excessive noise can harm people's physical and mental health, reduce property values, and cause strife among neighbors. The City of Sequim responds to noise issues and complaints in accordance with Sequim Municipal Code (SMC) Chapter 8.32 and applicable State law.

BACKGROUND

Local governments may seek to protect the "peace, comfort, and repose" of its residents and visitors. This phrase is particularly relevant to noise control. However, ordinances regulating noise must balance preventing or minimizing noise pollution and disturbances with allowing reasonable uses of private property, freedom of expression, and ordinary economic activity.

In 2024, the City Council adopted SMC 8.32 to provide a mechanism for handling noise-related issues. SMC 8.32 uses a "reasonable person" standard to assess when noise levels constitute a disturbance or public nuisance, allowing law enforcement and other officials to respond to complaints faster and with greater flexibility.

CURRENT STATUS

SMC 8.32 replaced an earlier ordinance. The code chapter sets forth permissible levels, durations, and times of day for certain noise types, and describes how potential violations will be addressed.

In most cases, the City will only seek to enforce noise complaints received from two or more people. The minimum penalty is $250. The noise does not need to be constant.

Generally, most noise complaints will be handled by the police department or animal control officer. Complaints about chronic noise originating from buildings (e.g., fans, generators) or

commercial properties (e.g., loading dock activity) may be referred to the building official. Complaints about City projects such as street paving may be directed to the Public Works department.

SCENARIOS/EXAMPLES

The following is not intended to be a complete list:

Potential Violations of the Noise Ordinance

- Rooster crowing intermittently for 20 minutes or more
- Frequent, repetitive, or continuous noise from a motor vehicle engine or horn lasting for 20 minutes or more
- Frequent, repetitive, or continuous sound, including amplified or live music, emanating from a building, structure, or property that can be heard at a distance of 50 feet or more for 20 minutes or more
- Shouting or singing on public streets between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m.
- Noise that interferes with the use of schools, hospitals, churches, and care facilities

Not Violations of the Noise Ordinance

- Neighbor's dog barking for 20 minutes or more (refer to SMC 6.04.030)
- Construction noise from private projects between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. on weekdays
- Municipal utilities, street sweeping, and temporary municipal construction projects
- Aircraft in flight
- Public safety equipment and alarms

SOURCES

SMC 8.32 Noise Control

SMC 6.04.030 (barking dogs)