



Clean Air Act Overview

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Clean Air Act Title IV – Noise Pollution

The 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments added a new title IV, relating to acid deposition control, *without repealing the existing title IV, relating to noise pollution*. The U.S. Code designates the original title IV (noise pollution) as subchapter IV and the new title IV (acid deposition control) as subchapter IV-A <<https://epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview/clean-air-act-title-iv-subchapter-acid-deposition-control>>.

This page has links to Clean Air Act sections that are part of the U.S. Code Collection maintained by the U. S. Government Publishing Office. EPA does not control the content of that website.

Clean Air Act Section	U.S. Code	Title
201	7641	Noise abatement  < https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/uscode-2013-title42/html/uscode-2013-title42-chap85-subchapiv-sec7641.htm >
	7642	Authorization of appropriations  < https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/uscode-2013-title42/html/uscode-2013-title42-chap85-subchapiv-sec7642.htm >

What is Noise Pollution?

The traditional definition of noise is “unwanted or disturbing sound”. Sound becomes unwanted when it either interferes with normal activities such as sleeping, conversation, or disrupts or diminishes one’s quality of life. The fact that you can’t see, taste or smell it may help explain why it has not received as much attention as other types of pollution, such as air pollution, or water pollution. The air around us is constantly filled with sounds, yet most of us would probably not say we are surrounded by noise. **Though for some, the persistent and escalating sources of sound can often be considered an annoyance. This “annoyance” can have major consequences, primarily to one’s overall health.**

Health Effects

Noise pollution adversely affects the lives of millions of people. Studies have shown that **there are direct links between noise and health.** Problems related to noise include stress related illnesses, high blood pressure, speech interference, hearing loss, sleep disruption, and lost productivity. Noise Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) is the most common and often discussed health effect, but research has shown that **exposure to constant or high levels of noise can cause countless adverse health affects.**

Learn more about the health effects:

The Noise Effects Handbook [↗](http://www.nonoise.org/library/handbook/handbook.htm) <<http://www.nonoise.org/library/handbook/handbook.htm>>, Office of Noise Abatement and Control, US EPA, 1981

Noise and Its Effects, [↗](http://www.nonoise.org/library/suter/suter.htm) <<http://www.nonoise.org/library/suter/suter.htm>> by Dr. Alice H. Suter, Administrative Conference of the United States, November 1991

Protection from Noise

Individuals can take many steps to protect themselves from the harmful effects of noise pollution. If people must be around loud sounds, they can protect their ears with hearing protection (e.g., ear plugs or ear muffs). There are various strategies for combating noise in your home, school, workplace, and the community.

Learn more about noise pollution prevention:

Noise Pollution Clearinghouse [↗](http://www.nonoise.org/) <<http://www.nonoise.org/>>

The Role of EPA

Under the Clean Air Act, the EPA administrator established the Office of Noise Abatement and Control (ONAC) to carry out investigations and studies on noise and its effect on the public health and welfare. Through ONAC, the EPA coordinated all Federal noise control activities, but in 1981 the Administration concluded that noise issues were best handled at the State and local level. As a result, ONAC was closed and primary responsibility of addressing noise issues was transferred to State and local governments. However, EPA retains authority to investigate and study noise and its effect, disseminate information to the public regarding noise pollution and its adverse health effects, respond to inquiries on matters related to noise, and evaluate the effectiveness of existing regulations for protecting the public health and welfare, pursuant to the [Noise Control Act of 1972 and the Quiet Communities Act of 1978](#).

Learn more about the Clean Air Act, Noise Control Act of 1972, and the Quiet Communities Act of 1978:

Clean Air Act (Title IV – Noise Pollution) [🔗](https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/uscode-2013-title42/html/uscode-2013-title42-chap85-subchapiv-sec7641.htm) <<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/uscode-2013-title42/html/uscode-2013-title42-chap85-subchapiv-sec7641.htm>>

The Noise Control Act of 1972 (42USC7641) [🔗](http://www.gsa.gov/graphics/pbs/noise_control_act_of_1972.pdf) <http://www.gsa.gov/graphics/pbs/noise_control_act_of_1972.pdf>(21 pp, 890K, About PDF <<https://epa.gov/home/pdf-files>>), from U.S. General Services Administration (GSA)

The Quiet Communities Act of 1978 [🔗](https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/95/s3083/text) <<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/95/s3083/text>>

Noise Sources Regulated by EPA

EPA or a designated Federal agency regulates noise sources, such as rail and motor carriers, low noise emission products, construction equipment, transport equipment, trucks, motorcycles, and the labeling of hearing protection devices.

Past Activities

Learn more about these activities:

- Press Release Announcing the Establishment of a Noise Labeling Program (1979) <<https://epa.gov/history/epa-history-noise-and-noise-control-act>>

- EPA Workshop on Hearing Protection Devices (PDF) [🔗](http://www.nonoise.org/epa/hearingpro.pdf)
<<http://www.nonoise.org/epa/hearingpro.pdf>>(212 pp, 5.1 MB) - March 27-28, 2003, Noise Pollution Clearinghouse
- EPA Docket (#OAR-2003-0024) Labeling of Hearing Protection Devices [🔗](https://www.regulations.gov/docket/epa-hq-oar-2003-0024)
<<https://www.regulations.gov/docket/epa-hq-oar-2003-0024>>
- Noise Pollution Clearinghouse [🔗](http://www.nonoise.org) <<http://www.nonoise.org>>
- Fact Sheet - Proposed Revisions to the Product Noise Labeling Regulation for Hearing Protection Devices <<https://epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview/fact-sheet-proposed-revisions-product-noise-labeling-regulation-hearing>>
- Federal Register Notice - Proposed Revisions to the Product Noise Labeling Regulation for Hearing Protection Devices [🔗](https://www.regulations.gov/document/epa-hq-oar-2003-0024-0040) <<https://www.regulations.gov/document/epa-hq-oar-2003-0024-0040>> - August 5, 2009

Frequently Asked Questions

EPA is usually the first line of contact when there are questions regarding noise pollution. However, the roles have shifted and State and local governments have acquired the responsibility of responding to many noise pollution matters.

For State Environmental Agencies, see EPA's Health and Environmental Agencies of U.S. States and Territories webpage <<https://epa.gov/aboutepa/health-and-environmental-agencies-us-states-and-territories>>.

Some of the commonly asked questions from the public relate to noises in the community (from your neighbor, boom cars, lawn equipment, etc.) and from commercial businesses (factory, auto mechanic shop, etc.), aviation, railroad/locomotive horn noise, and interstate motor carrier.

Resource Center

To learn more about noise and the adverse health effects of noise exposure, tools for children and teachers, conferences and workshops, and much more, please visit the following organizations. The following links exit the site

- Noise Pollution Clearinghouse [🔗](http://www.nonoise.org) <<http://www.nonoise.org>>
- Noise Off [🔗](http://www.noiseoff.org/) <<http://www.noiseoff.org/>>

- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association [🔗](http://www.asha.org) <<http://www.asha.org>>
- Center for Hearing and Communication [🔗](http://chchearing.org) <<http://chchearing.org>> (formerly the League for the Hard of Hearing)
- National Hearing Conservation Association [🔗](#)
- Council for Accreditation in Occupation Hearing Conservation [🔗](http://www.caohc.org) <<http://www.caohc.org>>
- American Academy of Audiology [🔗](http://www.audiology.org) <<http://www.audiology.org>>

For Kids and Teachers

- Noise Pollution Materials for Kids and Teachers - includes coloring books and information brochures suitable for children and educators. <<https://epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview/noise-pollution-materials-kids-and-teachers>>
- Related web sites The following links exit the site
 - Dangerous Decibels [🔗](http://dangerousdecibels.org) <<http://dangerousdecibels.org>>
 - National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders [🔗](https://www.nidcd.nih.gov) <<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov>>
 - National Hearing Conservation Association [🔗](#)

Clean Air Act Table of Contents by Title <<https://epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview/clean-air-act-text#toc>>

[Clean Air Act Overview Home](https://epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview) <<https://epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview>>

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[Requirements and History](https://epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview/clean-air-act-requirements-and-history) <<https://epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview/clean-air-act-requirements-and-history>>

[Role of Science and Technology](https://epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview/clean-air-act-solving-air-pollution-problems-science-and-technology) <<https://epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview/clean-air-act-solving-air-pollution-problems-science-and-technology>>

[Roles of State, Local, Tribal and Federal Governments](https://epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview/government-partnerships-reduce-air-pollution) <<https://epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview/government-partnerships-reduce-air-pollution>>

[Developing Programs Through Dialogue](https://epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview/developing-clean-air-programs-through-dialogue) <<https://epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview/developing-clean-air-programs-through-dialogue>>

[Flexibility with Accountability](https://epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview/building-flexibility-accountability-clean-air-programs) <<https://epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview/building-flexibility-accountability-clean-air-programs>>

[The Clean Air Act and the Economy](https://epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview/clean-air-act-and-economy) <<https://epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview/clean-air-act-and-economy>>

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