

Pool Pumps and Spa Blowers

In some circumstances, noise from liquid, air, heat or pool pumps and spa blowers can disturb neighbours, disrupt their sleep and interfere with their normal daily activities (listening to the TV, talking on the telephone). If loud enough, it can impact on people's health. Council do receive from time to time complaints about noise from pool pumps and spa blowers each year. Most of these complaints concern domestic units operated late at night.

Be a Good Neighbour

Take the time to talk to neighbours. Find out what concerns they may have and ask them for suggestions about solving any problems. Discuss noise concerns with neighbours before installing equipment that emits noise. Talk to neighbours first before reporting a noise nuisance to council. In many cases issues can be resolved by letting your neighbour know of your concern.

The Law

The *Environmental Protection Act 1994* introduced by the State Government include noise limits for electrical, mechanical or pneumatic pumps which include pool pumps and spa blowers. Council is legally required to enforce these limits when the noise is emitted from residential premises. If issues between neighbours cannot be resolved and further complaints are made, Council will have to investigate. If a pump or spa blower exceeds noise limits, Council may issue the owner or operator with a Direction Notice or an on-the-spot fine.

Allowable Noise Limits

If noise from a pump or spa blowers exceeds the following levels when measured at a neighbour's house, the owner may be issued with a direction notice or an on-the-spot fine.

- Before 7:00am and after 10:00pm if it makes an audible noise; or
- From 7:00am to 7:00pm if it makes a noise of more than 5dB(A) above the background level; or
- From 7:00pm to 10:00pm if it makes a noise of more than 3dB(A) above the background level

Ways to reduce noise

A range of measures can be used to reduce the noise impact from a pool pump or spa blower. These include:

- Limiting hours of use
Find out if there are particular times when the pool pump or spa blower disturbs neighbours. Most people are concerned about noise at night when they are trying to sleep. Put the pump on a timer to ensure it is not left running.
- Know your pool
Know how long the pool filter needs to run for acceptable water quality. In most cases, this is only long enough to achieve one to two turnovers of the pool volume per day. For an average

pool, run the pump for three to six hours per day. Make sure the required maintenance measures are carried out (e.g. chlorination, pH adjustment, etc.). Talk to the local pool shop or pool pump manufacturer for information.

- c) Selecting a quieter pool pump or spa blower
Older units can be particularly noisy, and an undersized pump needs to run for longer to maintain pool water quality. Replacing the pump or blower with a quieter or appropriately-sized model may help solve the problem.
- d) Location
Locate the pool pump or spa blower as far away as possible from neighbours and away from sensitive areas (e.g. bedroom windows). When installing a pool, ask the person installing it for advice. Avoid placing the pool pump or spa blower near a noise-reflective surface (e.g. alcoves, walls).
- e) Maintenance
Lack of maintenance can cause higher noise levels and reduce the effectiveness of the pump or blower. Keep the filter clean and contact the manufacturer or installer for advice.
- f) Fences or barriers
A solid fence can reduce noise levels. If the fence has any gaps, this method won't be as effective.
- g) Acoustic Enclosures
Enclosing the unit (e.g. in a wooden box with an absorbent lining) can be very effective and relatively inexpensive, although it is important that the unit has adequate ventilation. Ask for advice from the manufacturer or installer.
- h) Modifications to the fan or pump unit
Sometimes modifications can be made to the unit to reduce noise. Discuss this option with the manufacturer or installer.

Below is a practical guide to different decibel levels

- Quiet room in the house 20-30 decibels
- Daytime in a quiet residential street 35-45 decibels
- Large busy office 50-60 decibels
- Lawn mower from 15 meters away 70 decibels

For further information please contact:

Environmental Health Services at Mount Isa City Council on 4747 3200