

# Air conditioner noise

## Health Services Information Fact Sheet



Most properties these days have an air conditioner of some sort. Whilst they can create a nice comfortable situation in one residence they can create an unbearable situation in another due to noise.

### **What is allowed?**

Noise from air conditioners must comply with the permitted levels. These vary for each individual property as they are designed to take into consideration factors in the surrounding area. In general noise which can clearly be heard inside your house, particularly at night, is likely to exceed the permitted level.

### **Responsibility of installer:**

Section 80 of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*, places a responsibility on the installers of equipment to ensure that it does not emit unreasonable noise. An owner may also recover costs incurred where they are convicted of an offence which is the result of the unreasonable noise emission from this equipment. Therefore if a problem does emerge following the installation of an air conditioner, the owner may have options to require the installer rectify the situation.

### **Tips when installing an air conditioner:**

The location of the air conditioner is an important factor in ensuring that noise is not going to be intrusive. Air conditioners should be located as far away as possible from neighbours and away from noise sensitive areas such as bedrooms, living rooms and outdoor entertainment areas. Getting the initial installation position right can save a costly relocation and/or prosecution if noise complaints are lodged and justified.

The best location for refrigerated air conditioners is generally facing the rear yard. Placing the unit at the side of the house close to the neighbour's house is likely to create excessive noise, as the noise is trapped and reflected between the walls and the eaves of the houses. Many roof mounted evaporative coolers cause a noise problem on neighbouring properties. Ensure that the unit is installed in a location that will not directly impact on surrounding neighbours.

When choosing an air conditioner select the quietest one available in the price range. You can compare units by checking the sound power level indicated on the unit or specifications. The smaller the number of decibels the quieter the unit is and less likely to be an issue.

You can predict if noise from an air conditioner is likely to comply by using the document 'An Installers Guide to Air Conditioner Noise' prior to installing a system. Visit the City's website, [www.swan.wa.gov.au](http://www.swan.wa.gov.au), for a copy of this document.

### **Tips when dealing with noise from an air conditioner:**

- Speak to the person using the air conditioner to make them aware that it causes you annoyance, as they may not realise that it is an issue and it gives them the opportunity to change their actions.
- See whether or not an agreement can be made on the time of day at which the equipment is used or for how long.
- Should the annoyance caused by the air conditioner continue, you may lodge a written complaint to the City's Health Services.
- Be patient and remember owners of properties generally do not set out to deliberately create a noise issue.
- Rectification of the situation can take some time particularly if the unit needs to be relocated or modified. Owners of the unit will be subject to the availability of the installer or the arrival of parts.

### **Evaporative vs refrigerated:**

The City receives noise complaints regarding both types of air conditioning units. Therefore there is not a preference for one type over another and it is a decision of personal preference for the property owner. However noise from refrigerated units tend to remain the same level despite the setting as the noise is from the compressor. Noise from evaporative units on the other hand will vary depending on the setting as the noise is from the fan speed and generally increases at higher speeds.

### **What happens if a complaint is lodged?**

Where the City receives a noise complaint an investigation will be undertaken as per established procedures. For more information on this as well as possible enforcement options please refer to the City's Neighbourhood Noise fact sheet.

***If you require further information about noise, you may contact the City of Swan's Health Services on 9267 9153.***