

## Visalia, CA Municipal Code

## Chapter 8.36 NOISE

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### 8.36.010 Purpose.

A. The city council of the city declares and finds that excessive levels of noise are detrimental to the public health, welfare and safety and are contrary to the public interest as follows:

1. By interfering with sleep, communication, relaxation and the full use of one's property;
2. By interfering with noise sensitive land uses;
3. By contributing to hearing impairment and a wide range of adverse physiological stress conditions; and
4. By adversely affecting the value of real property.

B. It is the intent of this chapter to protect persons from excessive levels of noise within or near noise sensitive land uses such as residences, schools, churches, hospitals or public libraries, or other uses as may be determined by the city council of the city. (Prior code § 5090.1)

### 8.36.020 Definitions.

The following words, phrases and terms as used in this chapter shall have the following meanings:

“Abutting” means physically adjacent to or coterminous with or separated by means of an alley or a private street less than thirty (30) feet in width.

“Ambient noise level” means the composite of noise from all sources excluding the alleged offensive noise. In this context it represents the normal or existing level of environmental noise at a given location for a specific time of the day or night.

“A weighted sound level” means the sound level in decibels as measured with a sound level meter using the A:P weighted network (scale) at slow meter response. The unit of measurement is referred to herein as dB(A).

“Construction” means construction, erection, enlargement, alteration, conversion or movement of any building, structures or land together with any scientific surveys associated therewith.

“Cumulative period” means an additive period of time composed of individual time segments which may be continuous or interrupted.

“Decibel” means a unit for measuring the amplitude of a sound, equal to twenty (20) times the logarithm to the base ten of the ratio of the pressure of the sound measured to the reference pressure, which is twenty (20) micropascals.

“Emergency work” means the use of any machinery, equipment, vehicle, manpower or other activity in a short term effort to protect, or restore safe conditions in the community, or work by private or public utilities when restoring utility service.

“Fixed noise source” means a device, machine or combination thereof which creates sounds which is affixed or installed on real property, including but not limited to residential, agricultural, industrial and commercial machinery and equipment, pumps, fans, compressors, air conditioners and refrigeration equipment.

“Hospital” means any building or portion thereof used for the accommodation and medical care of sick, injured or infirm persons including rest homes and nursing homes.

“Impulsive noise” means a noise of short duration, usually less than one second, with an abrupt onset and rapid decay.

“Intruding noise level” means the sound level created, caused, maintained or originating from an alleged offensive source, measured in decibels, at a specified location while the alleged offensive source is in operation.

“Mobile noise source” means any source other than a fixed noise source.

“Noise disturbance” means any sound which violates the standards set forth in this chapter.

“Noise sensitive land use” means residential uses, churches, hospitals, schools, public library, or other such uses which are identified in the noise element of the general plan.

“Pure tone noise” means any noise which is distinctly audible as a single pitch (frequency) or set of pitches. For the purpose of this chapter, a pure tone shall exist if the one-third octave band sound pressure level in the band which the tone exceeds the arithmetic average of the sound pressure levels of the two continuous one-third octave bands by five dB for center frequencies of five hundred (500) Hz and above and by eight dB for center frequencies between one hundred sixty (160) and four hundred (400) Hz and by fifteen (15) dB for frequencies less than or equal to one hundred twenty-five (125) Hz.

“Residential property” means a parcel of real property which is zoned in whole or in part of residential purposes.

“School” means public or private institutions conducting regular academic instruction at preschool, kindergarten, elementary, secondary or collegiate levels.

“Sound level meter” means an instrument meeting American National Standard Institute (ANSI) Standard S1.4-1971 for Type 1 or Type 2 sound level meters or an instrument and the associated recording and

analyzing equipment which will provide equivalent data. (Prior code § 5090.2)

### **8.36.030 Noise measurement criteria.**

A. Any noise measurement made pursuant to the provisions of this chapter shall be made with a sound level meter using the “A” weighted network (scale) at slow meter response. Fast meter response shall be used for impulsive type sounds. Calibration of the measurement equipment utilizing an acoustical calibrator certified by its manufacturer to be in compliance with National Bureau of Standards (NBS) reference calibration levels shall be performed immediately prior to recording noise level data.

B. Exterior noise levels shall be measured within fifty (50) feet of the affected residence, school, hospital, church or public library. Where practical, the microphone shall be positioned three to five feet above the ground and away from reflective surfaces.

C. Interior noise levels shall be measured within the affected dwelling unit, at points at least four feet from the wall, ceiling or floor nearest the noise source, with windows in the normal seasonal configuration. Reported interior noise levels shall be determined by taking the arithmetic average of the readings taken at the various microphone locations. (Prior code § 5090.3)

### **8.36.040 Exterior noise standards--Fixed noise sources.**

A. It is unlawful for any person at any location within the city to create any noise, or to allow the creation of any noise, on property owned, leased, occupied or otherwise controlled by such person which causes the exterior noise level, when measured at the property line of any affected noise sensitive land use, to exceed any of the categorical noise level standards as set forth in the following table:

#### **NOISE LEVEL STANDARDS, dBA**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Cumulative Number of minutes in any one-hour time period</b>	<b>Evening and Daytime 6 a.m. to 7 p.m.</b>	<b>Nighttime 7 p.m. to 6 a.m.</b>
1	30	50	45
2	15	55	50
3	5	60	55
4	1	65	60
5	0	70	65

B. In the event the measured ambient noise level without the alleged offensive source in operation exceeds an applicable noise level standard in any category above, the applicable standard or standards shall be adjusted so as to equal the ambient noise level.

C. Each of the noise level standards specified above shall be reduced by five dB for pure tone noises, noises consisting primarily of speech or music, or for recurring impulsive noises.

D. If the intruding noise source is continuous and cannot reasonably be discontinued or stopped for a time period whereby the ambient noise level without the source can be measured, the noise level measured

while the source is in operation shall be compared directly to the noise level standards. (Prior code § 5090.4.1)

### **8.36.050 Exterior noise standards--Mobile noise sources prohibition against use.**

It is unlawful to operate any of the below-listed devices, appliances, equipment or vehicles on public or private property abutting noise sensitive land uses between the weekday hours of seven p.m. and six a.m., and between the weekend hours of seven p.m. and nine a.m.

- A. Power-assisted leaf blowers, lawn mowers, edgers or other power equipment used for the maintenance of property;
- B. Vehicle equipment, which equipment is not expressly regulated by state or federal statute, such as car radios or sound amplification equipment which is audible more than twenty-five (25) feet from the exterior of the vehicle;
- C. Construction equipment including jackhammers, portable generators, pneumatic equipment, trenchers, or other such equipment, except for emergency repair purposes as provided in Section 8.36.070;
- D. Any other noises made by crying, shouting, or by means of whistle, rattle, bell, gong whether or not for the purpose of advertising or other such purposes. (Prior code § 5090.4.2)

### **8.36.060 Residential interior noise standards.**

A. It is unlawful for any person, at any location within the city, to operate or cause to be operated, any source of sound or to allow the creation of any noise which causes the noise level when measured inside a dwelling unit to exceed any of the categorized noise level standards as set forth in the following table:

#### **NOISE LEVEL STANDARDS, dBA**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Cumulative Number of minutes in any one-hour time period</b>	<b>Evening and Daytime 6 a.m. to 7 p.m.</b>	<b>Nighttime 7 p.m. to 6 a.m.</b>
1	5	45	35
2	1	50	40
3	0	55	45

B. In the event the measured ambient noise level without the alleged offensive source in operation exceeds an applicable noise level standard in any category above, the applicable standard or standards shall be adjusted so as to equal the ambient noise level.

C. Each of the noise level standards specified above shall be reduced by five dB for pure tone noises, noises consisting primarily of speech or music, or four recurring impulsive noises.

D. If the intruding noise source is continuous and cannot reasonably be discontinued or stopped for a time period whereby the ambient noise level without the source can be measured, the noise level measured while the source is in operation shall be compared directly to the noise level standards.

E. If the source of noise is of an impulse or voluntary nature such as shouting, loud conversation, playing

or operation of audio and video equipment and is audible in a dwelling unit, the noise level in the above table shall conclusively be determined to be exceeded. (Prior code § 5090.6)

### **8.36.070 Noise source exemptions.**

The following activities shall be exempted from the provisions of this chapter:

A. Activities conducted in public parks, public playgrounds and public or private school grounds, including but not limited to school athletic and school entertainment events during normal hours of instruction;

B. Any mechanical device, apparatus or equipment used, related to, or connected with emergency activities or emergency work;

C. Noise sources associated with the infrequent, occasional and unusual maintenance of residential property provided such activities take place between the hours of six a.m. and nine p.m. on any day except Saturday or Sunday, or between the hours of eight a.m. and nine p.m. on Saturday or Sunday;

D. Noise sources associated with a lawful commercial or industrial activity caused by installed mechanical devices or equipment, including air conditioning or refrigeration systems, installed prior to the effective date of this chapter; that this exception shall expire twelve months after the effective date of the chapter. This exception shall not apply to such mechanical devices which are not in good repair;

E. Noise sources associated with the collection of waste or garbage from commercially zoned or industrially zoned property by the city or its authorized franchisee;

F. Any activity to the extent regulation thereof has been preempted by state or federal law;

G. Notwithstanding the provisions of Sections 8.36.040 and 8.36.050, where the intruding noise source when measured as provided in Section 8.36.030 is an existing residential air conditioning or refrigeration system or associated equipment, the exterior noise level at the property line shall not exceed fifty-five (55) dBA. For residential air conditioning or refrigeration systems or associated equipment installed after the effective date of this chapter, the exterior noise level at the property line when measured as provided in Section 8.36.030 shall not exceed fifty (50) dBA;

H. Notwithstanding the provisions of Sections 8.36.040 and 8.36.050, the collection of waste or garbage from residentially zoned property or from persons authorized to engage in such activity, and who are operating truck-mounted loading or compacting equipment, shall not take place before six a.m. or after seven p.m. The noise level created by such activities when measured at a distance of fifty (50) feet in an open area shall not exceed the following standard:

1. Eighty-five (85) dBA for equipment in use, purchased or leased prior to the effective date of this chapter,

2. Eighty (80) dBA for new equipment purchased or leased after the effective date of this chapter;

I. Notwithstanding the provisions of Sections 8.36.040 and 8.36.050, noise sources associated with the operation of electrical substations shall not exceed fifty (50) dBA when measured as provided in Section 8.36.030. (Prior code § 5090.6)

### **8.36.080 Warning signs in places of public entertainment.**

It is unlawful for any person to permit the operation or playing of any loudspeaker, musical instrument, motorized racing vehicle, or other source of sound for public entertainment within a building or structure wherein the noise level exceeds ninety-five (95) dBA as determined using the slow response of a sound level meter at any point normally occupied by a customer, without a conspicuous and legible sign stating

“WARNING! SOUND LEVELS WITHIN MAY CAUSE HEARING IMPAIRMENT.” (Prior code § 5090.7)

### **8.36.090 Variances.**

A. The owner or operator of a noise source for which it has been determined violates any of the provisions of this chapter may file an application for variance from strict compliance with any particular provisions of this chapter where such variance will not result in a hazardous condition or a nuisance and strict compliance would be unreasonable in view of all the circumstances. The owner or operator shall set forth all actions taken to comply with such provisions, and the reasons why immediate compliance cannot be achieved. A separate application shall be filed for each noise source; provided, however, that several mobile sources under common ownership or fixed sources under common ownership on a single property may be combined into one application.

B. Upon receipt of the application and within thirty (30) days, the community development director shall either: (1) approve such request in whole or in part; (2) deny the request; or (3) refer the request directly to the city council for action thereon in accordance with the provisions of this chapter. In the event the variance is approved, reasonable conditions may be imposed which may include restrictions on noise level, noise duration and operating hours, an approved method of achieving compliance and a time schedule for its implementation. The decision of the community development director is subject to appeal to the city council upon recommendation of the planning commission by filing a written appeal not later than fifteen (15) days following the mailing of the decision to the applicant.

C. Factors which the community development director or city council must consider shall include but not be limited to the following:

1. Uses of property within the area affected by the noise;
2. Factors related to initiating and completing all remedial work;
3. Age and useful life of the existing noise source;
4. The general public interest, welfare and safety.

D. The city council may grant variances from provisions of this chapter subject to such term, conditions and requirement as may be deemed reasonable to achieve compliance with the provisions and intent of this chapter.

E. A fee may be charged to recover the actual costs in processing such variances.

F. The approved noise ordinance variance must be in the possession of any operator of mobile noise sources during otherwise prohibited by the provisions of this chapter. An approved noise ordinance variance shall also be in the possession of a fixed noise source which would otherwise violate the provisions of this chapter. Failure to have the variance in the possession of the operator or property occupant when the provisions of this chapter are violated, as indicated above, shall constitute a violation of this chapter, enforceable as provided in Section 8.36.100. (Prior code § 5090.8)

### **8.36.100 Violation--Enforcement.**

A. The violation of any of the provisions of this chapter shall be a misdemeanor punishable as provided in Section 1.12.010. Each hour of activity which violated the provisions herein shall constitute a sole and separate violation. The provisions of this chapter may also be enforced by an injunction issued out of the court of jurisdiction. Any violation of the provisions of this chapter shall be deemed to be a public nuisance.

B. The community development director, or a designee, shall be responsible for the enforcement of

Section 8.36.040 and Section 8.36.060(A) through (D) inclusive. The chief of police shall be responsible for the enforcement of Sections 8.36.050 and 8.36.060(E). (Prior code § 5090.9)

### **8.36.110 Emergency equipment.**

The provisions of this chapter shall have no application to the sounding of a siren or the making of other usual signal or signals by any police or other peace officers in the performance of their duties, nor to the sounding of any siren or the making of any other usual signal upon any ambulance or firefighting equipment in the usual and customary manner. (Prior code § 5091)