

THE Quiet Zone

Car Alarms: Alarmingly Useless

For almost thirty years, car alarms have polluted America's cities. The insurance industry says they don't reduce car theft—but they do rouse sleepers, disturb readers, interrupt conversations, and make neighborhoods less civil. Now that silent, inexpensive anti-theft devices are available, the Noise Pollution Clearinghouse is partnering with the anti-alarm group Silent Majority to banish car alarms for good.

Already, the New York City Council is considering legislation outlawing the use of car alarms within the city. A new report by Transportation Alternatives, a non-profit advocacy group, finds that the alarms are "alarmingly useless," and could be legally and effectively banned. New groups in Chicago and Hawaii are forming to introduce local versions of the proposed New York law.

Now it's your turn.

YOU CAN HELP.

We need you to help us fight against car alarms in your community. New York's activists have done the heavy lifting:

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

I am frequently asked by journalists, "What can individuals do about noise pollution?" They are looking for an easy solution, something you can buy.

The answer is not that easy. Individuals can help, by buying quieter products and being good neighbors, but our neighbors have to do the same to preserve the peace. And so does Harley-Davidson and SONY and FedEx....

Choosing peace and quiet is a community decision—a political decision. It requires activists and activism—it requires active citizens. This issue of the *Quiet Zone* is focused on what you can do.

YOU CAN HELP. Join our effort to silence car alarms, to make sure flight paths minimize noise exposure, to build quieter schools, and to compile noise laws and evaluate noise ordinances. If everyone receiving this newsletter made just one phone call to a Congress member, that would be 10,000 more than they received about noise last year.

This newsletter describes relatively small actions you can take in the next week or two that collectively will have a big impact. I hope you will help our communities choose peace and quiet.

Peace and Quiet,


Les Blomberg,
Executive Director

At NPC: Lawn Mowers, Motorcycles, Boats, EPA

At NPC, we've been working on four big projects this summer. The results will be published by Spring 2004. Here's a brief list of what we're doing and what's coming.

QUIET LAWN

We've tested dozens of the quietest lawn equipment available. We are currently looking for donors and sponsors who will help us promote the results and encourage people to buy quieter lawn equipment. If you can't wait till next spring to buy a mower, however, give us a call or at least don't buy a new mower without looking at the Brill electric reel mower or the Country Homes electric Neuton mower. Modern battery technology has made electric mowers a quiet alternative to the din of the internal combustion engine.

QUIET LAKES

We've collected and evaluated the watercraft noise regulations from all 50 states, and we're looking into developing better regulations. Also, we've been busy measuring noise levels at lakes and the acoustic footprint of various types of watercraft. Our watercraft noise resources will soon include: "The Loon

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THE SILENT TREATMENT: ALTERNATIVES TO NOISY CAR ALARMS

Device	How it Works	Brands	Cost
Mechanical Immobilizers	The steering wheel or brake pedal is “locked down” with a bar.	Brakelock, Club, Autolock, Autowatch	\$40-80 with no installation
Pager Alarms	Pager replaces the siren in conventional alarms and signals a break-in to the owner.	Rock, most alarm manufacturers	\$120-350 including installation
Tracking Systems	A transmitter within the car (using GPS or triangulation) signals vehicle location to police who can then apprehend the thieves.	LoJack, Viper, Peak, Blue Water, Spy Chest, Onstar, Boomerang, GlobalGuard	\$600-1200 including installation; monthly fees are also charged
Electrical Immobilizers	Cuts the electrical systems at several points. Owner must authenticate with transponder or PIN-code to start the vehicle.	Autowatch, NoStart, Startop, Ravelco	\$100-350 including installation
Anti-Carjacking Systems	Events such as a door opening require driver to re-authenticate an operating vehicle. If not authenticated, thief may take the car for only a short distance where it stops safely.	Carguard, Clifford	\$350-850 including installation

Source: Center for Automotive Security Innovation and Noise Pollution Clearinghouse

The Quiet Zone

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CAR ALARMS

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researching the economic impact of alarms and their ineffectiveness, the legality of a ban, and even drafting legislation. Now, we need people to spread the word, present the data to local politicians and convince them to take action. If you think you can talk to your neighbors, write letters, or possibly even lead a local group against car alarms, please check the box on the enclosed return envelope.

We'll send you a packet and give you a call after we see who else in your community can help stamp out this urban blight.

Silencing Alarms Will Work

The car alarm industry is working hard to stop a car alarm ban. They've got the money, but we've got the people. Industry lobbyists can't be in 50-100 cities at once, but citizens can. We need your help in a coordinated attack on noisy and ineffective car alarms.

Not only do we have the numerical advantage, the odds are on our side too. We don't have to achieve bans in all 50-100 cities at once. All we have to do is ban them in one major city, and the precedent will be set. Then other cities, over time, will ban them too.

The Future of Peace and Quiet Revisited

This is the second in a series of articles on the future of peace and quiet. The first article appeared in the Spring 2003 newsletter. It provided a vision of a quieter, more peaceful future, and a historical context for today's anti-noise movement. (You can find the spring newsletter online at <http://www.nonoise.org/library/qz4/>.)

Even if the anti-noise movement did everything right—even if the President and Congress supported us 100%, if the EPA aggressively regulated noise pollution, if local and state laws were widely enforced, etc.—we would probably fail, in the long-term, in our effort to reduce noise if we did not convince the next generation (and successive generations) to value peace and quiet.

Young people growing up today are being born into a world where they cannot easily find peace and quiet. Peace and quiet is not an expectation of theirs. They do not clearly see the degradation our environment has suffered because they wrongly assume the world is and always has been noisy.

It's up to us as parents, adults, teachers, and citizens to show them the value of peace and quiet. That is why **the issue of noise and schools is as important as any noise issue today.** If we don't take a long-term view, and work to create an ethic of respect for neighbors and an appreciation of quiet with our young people, any short-term reduction in noise will eventually be lost. It takes only a dozen short years for today's children to move from reading Goodnight Moon ("Goodnight noises everywhere") to driving mufflerless boom cars.

Unfortunately, noise and schools isn't seen to be as important as it

truly is by the public in general and even by the anti-noise movement. One year ago, NPC supporters were part of an effort to help protect a new standard concerning classroom noise. While the effort was successful, the letter-writing campaign drew the fewest responses of any campaign we have undertaken. Too many anti-noise activists view school noise as one more issue, like aviation noise, boom cars, air-conditioner noise, etc., and don't see educating our young people as the infrastructure of a quieter future.

YOU CAN HELP.

Every neighborhood school provides an opportunity to build the infrastructure of quiet. Instead of lamenting that young people have not learned the value of quiet, which we have not taught them, help us teach them the importance of peace and quiet. The first step is to ensure that schools are quiet learning environments. The second is to ensure that noise pollution is part of the curriculum. Please bring this issue to your local school.

NPC is launching a new website to help with this. Go to <http://www.schoolnoise.org> to learn more about schools and noise. The website has sections tailored to students, teachers, administrators, parents, school architects, and persons with hearing disabilities. Each section has a number of suggestions as to what each

group can do. An important first step that parents and citizens can take is to ensure that school classrooms meet the American National Standards Institute standard ANSI S12.60-2002. You can learn how to get a copy of the standard and measure the noise level on the [schoolnoise.org](http://www.schoolnoise.org) website.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT DID IT. CAN THE ANTI-NOISE MOVEMENT DO IT TOO?

A whole generation of kids learned not to litter from Woodsy Owl ("Give a hoot, don't pollute"), and so did their parents. The anti-noise movement needs to create a cultural transformation like the one that occurred in the 1960s and 70s around litter. Ask almost any group of people if they throw McDonald's wrappers out the window and they'll say no. We know from driving our highways that some people still do litter, but everyone knows the right answer, and most refrain from littering. Today, we need to teach our school children that noise is the litter of the soundscape.

The Plane Truth

This has been a bad summer for aviation noise. While traffic at many of the largest airports is still less than pre-9/11 levels, nearly one quarter of the nation's 400 plus busiest airports are reporting traffic levels greater than pre-9/11 levels (see table, *Aviation Noise Takes Off at More Than 100 Airports*).

Not all the bad news is in the air, however.

- The FAA's plan for the next five years, "Flight Plan 2004-2008" mentions noise only seven times in the approximately 8,800 word document. That is nearly doubled what was in the draft version (the increase probably was in response to NPC's complaint that noise was mentioned only four times in the draft).
- Senator Trent Lott, R-Mississippi, in a favor to major donor Northwest Airlines, inserted language into the conference committee aviation funding bill not allowing airports to soundproof homes below the 65 DNL threshold.
- President Bush is seeking to limit environmental review of transportation projects such as airport expansion.
- The FAA has used its ability to withhold funding to punish the Naples, Florida airport for being the first airport to follow the Aviation Noise and Capacity Act and restrict Stage II aircraft.
- The FAA also plans to scrap weight limits at smaller airports, opening them up to larger craft. This change, if it is allowed to stand, will significantly reshape the soundscape around smaller and medium-sized airports.

- The FAA is redesigning airspace around the country, starting in the Northeastern US. They are not, however, looking at who or what is underneath those flight paths. Homes, churches, schools, hospitals, it doesn't matter. They are redesigning the airspace for "efficiency and safety."

It's time to do something about the FAA.

Congressman Steve Rothman and Senator Jon Corzine of New Jersey have initiated an effort to put nationwide pressure from Congress on the FAA to consider aircraft noise in its redesign. They have said, "We want to ensure that another goal of this redesign is the significant reduction of aircraft noise... We must take meaningful steps to reduce aircraft noise and the threat it poses to the quality-of-life for millions of Americans."

Congressman Rothman and Senator Corzine have asked other Members of Congress from across the country, in both political parties, to join them in encouraging the FAA to include aircraft noise in its criteria for the redesign of our nation's airspace.

YOU CAN HELP.

Contact your Members of Congress and ask that they work with Senator Corzine and Congressman Rothman in their effort to require consideration of noise impacts in the redesign of the nation's airspace. Tell them that noise pollution, and not just aviation noise, is a significant environmental problem that is not being addressed by the U.S. government.

Contact your representatives and both senators via the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121.

AVIATION NOISE TAKES OFF AT MORE THAN 100 AIRPORTS

Airport/State	5/03 Traffic levels as a percentage of 5/01 Traffic	Rank of Airport 5/03*	Airport/State	5/03 Traffic levels as a percentage of 5/01 Traffic	Rank of Airport 5/03*
Lake Tahoe Airport/CA	314.03	465	Southern Illinois Airport/IL	127.38	216
Cincinnati Airport/KY	191.22	8	Napa County Airport/CA	124.64	124
Northeast Philadelphia Airport/PA	157.12	82	Bolton Field Airport/OH	123.13	308
Jefferson City Memorial Airport/MO	145.85	388	Phoenix-Deer Valley Municipal Airport/AZ	122.96	20
Tyler Pounds Field/TX	139.35	130	Brackett Field Airport/CA	122.75	58
University of Illinois-Willard Airport/IL	132.76	166	New Bedford Regional Airport/MA	122.64	284
Terre Haute Int'l/Hulman Field Airport/IN	131.30	270	Erie International Airport/PA	121.70	373

AVIATION NOISE TAKES OFF AT MORE THAN 100 AIRPORTS

Airport/State	5/03 Traffic levels as a percentage of 5/01 Traffic	Rank of Airport 5/03*	Airport/State	5/03 Traffic levels as a percentage of 5/01 Traffic	Rank of Airport 5/03*
Richard Lloyd Jones Jr. Airport/OK	121.53	36	Fayetteville Regional/Grannis Field Airport/NC	106.20	363
General William J. Fox Airfield/CA	121.22	253	Lubbock International Airport/TX	106.02	244
Natrona County International Airport/WY	121.00	374	Jefferson County/SE Texas Regional Airport/TX	105.99	354
Merrill Field/AK	120.98	48	Barkley Regional Airport/KY	105.87	454
Midland International Airport/TX	119.99	245	Van Nuys Airport/CA	105.28	7
Eastern Oregon Regional at Pendleton Airport/OR	119.04	401	Delaware County Airport-Johnson Field/IN	104.71	441
Kona International at Keahole Airport/HI	118.90	190	Forbes Field/KS	104.50	402
Austin Straubel International Airport/WI	117.80	320	Huntsville/Decatur-Carl T. Jones Field/AL	104.49	247
Joslin Field/Magic Valley Regional Airport/ID	117.62	411	Cherry Capital Airport/MI	104.48	189
Riverside Municipal Airport/CA	117.38	205	Central Illinois Regional Airport/IL	104.43	377
Hawkins Field/MS	117.32	370	Pueblo Memorial Airport/CO	104.23	277
Jackson County-Reynolds Field Airport/MI	116.83	327	Lebanon Municipal Airport/NH	104.03	385
Oneida County Airport/NY	116.02	265	Kendall-Tamiami Executive Airport/FL	103.93	77
Camarillo Airport/CA	115.90	87	Gainesville Regional Airport/FL	103.34	317
Stewart International Airport/NY	114.51	185	Amarillo International Airport/TX	103.27	148
Drake Field/AR	114.34	432	Boca Raton Airport/FL	103.16	252
Valdosta Regional Airport/GA	113.66	353	St. Louis Downtown Airport/IL	103.06	106
David Wayne Hooks Memorial Airport/TX	113.61	54	Gregg County Airpark/TX	103.02	204
Chicago Midway Airport/IL	113.49	34	Sacramento International Airport/CA	102.81	121
Fanning Field/ID	113.12	356	Santa Monica Municipal Airport/CA	102.80	140
Duluth International Airport/MN	112.49	291	Rosecrans Memorial Airport/MO	102.60	456
Sacramento Executive Airport/CA	111.59	109	St. Thomas Airport/VI	102.57	257
Wood County Airport-Gill Robb Wilson Field/WV	111.44	395	Jeffco Airport/CO	102.45	95
Ohio State University Airport/OH	111.02	211	Lancaster Airport/PA	102.26	206
Evansville Regional Airport/IN	111.02	254	St. Croix Airport/VI	102.15	368
Falcon Field Airport/AZ	110.92	40	Dubuque Regional Airport/IA	102.13	410
Chicago Aurora Municipal Airport/IL	110.52	165	Louisville Int'l/Standiford Field Airport/KY	102.00	88
St. Paul Downtown Holman Field/MN	110.41	139	Kenai Municipal Airport/AK	101.91	293
Elko Regional-J. C. Harris Field/NV	110.40	455	Tucson International Airport/AZ	101.86	44
Burbank-Glendale-Pasadena Airport/CA	110.01	94	Salt Lake City International Airport/UT	101.71	22
Joplin Regional Airport/MO	109.89	429	Bethel Airport/AK	101.70	157
San Antonio International Airport/TX	109.87	46	Greater Rockford Airport/IL	101.67	248
Chino Airport/CA	109.49	126	Craig Municipal Airport/FL	101.62	113
Acadiana Regional Airport/LA	109.33	310	Oakland-Pontiac Airport/MI	101.52	39
Columbia Regional Airport/MO	109.31	423	Witham Field/FL	101.51	218
McAllen Miller International Airport/TX	108.99	334	Bowman Field/KY	101.38	177
Modesto City-County Airport-Harry Sham Field/CA	108.59	200	Salina Municipal Airport/KS	101.29	316
Santa Barbara Municipal Airport/CA	108.51	125	Rapid City Regional Airport/SD	101.29	369
Williamson County Regional Airport/IL	107.93	384	Helena Regional Airport/MT	101.26	348
Kissimmee Municipal Airport/FL	107.87	115	McClellan Palomar Airport/CA	101.10	80
St. Louis Regional Airport/IL	107.42	260	Pompano Beach Airpark Airport/FL	100.61	83
San Luis Obispo Cty/McChesney Field Airport/CA	106.69	202	Des Moines International Airport/IA	100.59	181
Wittman Regional Airport/WI	106.62	169	Norfolk International Airport/VA	100.50s	160
Bellingham International Airport/WA	106.58	222	Felts Field/WA	100.41	280
Pensacola Regional Airport/FL	106.28	161	Quad City International Airport/IL	100.25	336

* In terms of take-offs and landings in 5/03

The Noise Ordinance Past and Future

In the next ten years, the nature of noise enforcement will change significantly. There are two factors driving this change. 1) **Growing political awareness of noise as an important environmental issue.** More and more middle class and suburban Americans are seeking better noise protection. (It is not just an urban problem anymore; see our last newsletter at <http://www.nonoise.org/library/qz4/> for a full discussion of the suburbanization of noise.) 2) **Falling costs of noise meters.** Economies of scale will significantly reduce the cost of noise meters.

Currently, major cities use decibel-based noise ordinances, while suburban and rural areas tend to rely on more subjective criteria such as whether the noise is “reasonable.” There are problems with both approaches, but the biggest problem common to both is a lack of enforcement. Often there are political reasons an ordinance is not well enforced. Often it’s because noise meters cost too much to have in many police cars.

The cost limitations are about to change, and for many communities, prices already have fallen enough to make their purchase possible. Just as computer prices have fallen while performance has increased, noise meters are and will continue to experience the same fate. The key lies in economies of scale—the manufacturers need to sell enough meters to buy components in bulk and streamline their production.

In the past, many manufacturers have mistakenly promoted their best (and most expensive) equipment to police departments. Additionally, acoustical consultants and communities have written too many local ordinances that require a noise expert to enforce them. This has inadvertently doomed noise enforcement. When meters are expensive, cities don’t buy enough of them, so they are not available to police officers when they are needed. When meters are complicated, fewer officers know how to use them, so they sit unused. When ordinances are complicated, officers don’t enforce them, so the regulations exist only in the books.

Now, communities, police, and manufacturers are starting to realize that using lots of simple, inexpensive

meters and having less complicated laws is a better situation. As 1) suburbs add their buying power to cities, 2) the use of noise meters expands into new regulatory markets, such as highway weigh stations, National Parks, vehicle inspection facilities, and 3) off-road vehicle noise (snowmobile, ATV, and watercraft) becomes more strictly regulated, demand will facilitate lower costs. In ten years, the markets for noise meters could be orders of magnitude larger than today.

Already, noise meters are cheaper than radar speed detectors. Often, however, police departments don’t have to buy radar guns. State and federal programs often provide the equipment to local police departments. We also need to create a parallel funding mechanism for noise meters.

NPC is working to stay ahead of changes in noise regulation and measurement. However, creating new model ordinances (ones that protect the noise-polluted, not the noise polluter) for communities as they move into the noise meter market and developing funding mechanisms so local police departments don’t have to purchase the meters are not the high-profile initiatives that attract funding. But these “nuts and bolts” initiatives are essential if we want quieter communities. The noise meter can be the friend or enemy of quiet, depending upon what the noise ordinance says. And since noise ordinances get copied from town to town, it’s very important that NPC stay ahead of and be a part of these changes.

YOU CAN HELP.

The first thing we need, to stay ahead of these changes, is to know what the ordinances say right now. We have ordinances from 200 large cities, but we’d like to see the ordinances from hundreds of rural and suburban communities, particularly if they use decibel levels in them. **If you can, please stop by your town hall, get a copy of your noise ordinance, and mail it to NPC.** We’ll put the best on our website and use them all to evaluate and develop a model community noise ordinance for smaller communities.

Manufacturers of quiet products, sound level meters, acoustical building materials, hearing protection, and acoustical consultants provide 10% of NPC's funding and many of the tools, products, and services needed to quiet our noisy world. Thank you to the following for supporting the work of the Noise Pollution Clearinghouse.

ACE Adventure Center	Etymotic Research, Inc.	Polymer Technologies, Inc.
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You can learn more about these firms on our website at <http://www.nonoise.org/products/index.htm>. If your firm would like to help support the world's largest online noise library, with more than 2,100 users each day, and more than a gigabyte of data available, contact Peter Buknatski at the Noise Pollution Clearinghouse, (888)-200-8332.

AT NPC

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vs. the Jet Ski," a demonstration CD of jet ski noise; "The Lake Soundscape and the Unique Acoustical Properties of the Lake Environment," a tool for those trying to explain why our waters need extra protection; and "Why Tractor-Trailer Trucks Are Quieter than Boats," a report outlining the weak and ineffective regulations used to protect the lake soundscape. Also, "Drowning in Noise," NPC's previously published report on the costs of jet ski noise, is available.

ILLEGAL MUFFLERS

We've been attending motorcycle rallies, collecting state and local laws and regulations, and riding with police officers who are enforcing muffler regulations.

Expect to see "Illegal in Every State," our report on what communities can do to ensure that Harley-Davidson's second century is much quieter than its first.

EPA NOISE LIBRARY

We've been adding several documents from the EPA's noise library to our website each week. Check out our newest library, which will eventually hold more than 100 of the EPA's most important noise documents that have languished unused in the EPA's basement for almost 25 years. See www.nonoise.org/epa/.

YOU CAN HELP.

These are all unfinished projects. They need your support to be completed. Please use the return envelope to donate to NPC. As little as 10 cents a day from you can help us see these projects to completion.

Thank you to the following major philanthropic corporate donors to the Noise Pollution Clearinghouse:

- Acentech, acoustical consultants.
- Acoustical Society of America, professional acoustical organization.
- Casella Cel, USA, maker of noise meters.
- E-A-R/Aearo Company, maker of hearing protection devices.
- Ecophon Acoustic Ceilings, maker of acoustical building materials.
- Illbruck Noise and Sound Control, maker of acoustical building materials.
- Noise Busters Direct, seller of hearing protection.
- Owens-Corning, maker of acoustical building materials.
- Pelton Marsh Kinsella, acoustical consultants.
- Quest Technologies, maker of noise meters.
- Sunlawn Push Reel Mowers, US distributor of push lawn equipment.
- Wild Sanctuary, natural sound recordings, books, and research.
- Quiet Solution Inc., maker of noise control products and building materials.

You can learn more about these firms on our website at <http://www.nonoise.org/partners.htm>

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