

ARTICLE II. - SOUND CONTROL^[2]

Footnotes:

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Charter reference— Authority of City to preserve health, safety and comfort of its inhabitants, § 2.04.

Cross reference— Offenses against public peace, § 19-110 et seq.

Sec. 11-19. - Title and application of article generally.

This article may be cited as the "Sound Control Ordinance of the City of Richmond." It shall be applicable to the control of sound originating within the corporate limits of the City of Richmond, Virginia.

(Code 2004, § 38-31; Ord. No. 2011-119-140, § 2, 7-25-2011)

Sec. 11-20. - Definitions.

The following terms, when used in this article, shall have the meanings hereinafter ascribed to them, unless otherwise clearly provided or indicated by the context:

ANSI means the American National Standards Institute and any successor or successors.

Daytime extended hours means the period beginning at 11:00 p.m. of each day and ending at 7:00 a.m. of the next day, local time, for which the Chief Administrative Officer or the designee thereof has expressly authorized the relevant activity in writing for reasons related to the health or safety of persons engaged in the activity or for reasons related to Federal or State funding requirements.

Daytime hours means the period each day beginning at 7:00 a.m. and ending at 11:00 p.m., local time.

dBA means the sound pressure level in decibels as measured on a sound level meter using the A-weighting network. For purposes of this article, sound pressure levels shall be measured at the place where sound is perceived to constitute a violation of this article and not at the place where it originates.

Decibel means a unit for measuring the volume of a sound, equal to 20 times the logarithm to the base ten of the ratio of the pressure of the sound measured to the reference pressure, which is 20 micropascals (20 micronewtons per square meter).

Emergency means any occurrence or set of circumstances involving actual or imminent physical trauma or property damage which demands immediate curative or corrective action.

Emergency work means any curative or corrective work performed for the purpose of preventing or alleviating the physical trauma or property damage caused by an emergency.

Excessive sound means sound that exceeds 55 dBA during nighttime hours and sound that exceeds 65 dBA during daytime hours when measured inside a structure, or sound that exceeds 65 dBA during nighttime hours and sound that exceeds 75 dBA during daytime hours when measured outside a structure, or both.

GCWR means gross combination weight rating.

Gross combination weight rating means, in cases where trailers and tractors are separable, the value specified by the manufacturer as the recommended maximum loaded weight of the combination vehicle.

Gross vehicle weight rating means the value specified by the manufacturer as the recommended maximum loaded weight of a single motor vehicle.

GVWR means gross vehicle weight rating.

Motor carrier vehicle engaged in interstate commerce means any vehicle for which noise emissions regulations apply pursuant to Section 18 of the Noise Control Act of 1972 (P.L. 92-574), as amended, codified at 42 USC § 4917.

Motor vehicle means any device that is self-propelled or that is designed for self-propulsion, in, on or by which any person or property is or may be transported or drawn on a street, except devices moved by human power or used exclusively on stationary rails or tracks.

Motorcycle means any motor vehicle designed to travel on not more than three wheels in contact with the ground and any four-wheeled vehicle weighing less than 500 pounds and equipped with an engine of less than six horsepower, excepting farm tractors.

Multifamily dwelling or mixed use structure means a structure whose principal use is as a two-family dwelling or a multifamily dwelling, and includes any dwelling unit contained within the same building as other permitted principal uses, as those terms are defined by Section 30-1220. It does not include hotels and motels or lodginghouses, as those terms are defined by Section 30-1220.

Nighttime hours means the period beginning at 11:00 p.m. of each day and ending at 7:00 a.m. of the next day, local time.

Residential zone means any location within any area zoned residential or residential-office pursuant to the City's zoning ordinance, and designated as such by the R- or RO- prefix in Chapter 30.

School means a public or private school for elementary, middle or high school grades or an institution of higher education offering postsecondary degrees as a college or university.

Sound means an oscillation in pressure, particle displacement, particle velocity or other physical parameter, in a medium with internal forces that causes compression and rarefaction of that medium. The definition of sound may include any characteristic of such sound, including duration, intensity and frequency.

Sound level means the weighted sound pressure level obtained by the use of a sound level meter and the A-frequency-weighting network, as specified in ANSI specifications for sound level meters.

Sound level meter means an instrument which includes a microphone, amplifier, RMS detector, integrator or time averager, output meter and weighting networks used to measure sound pressure levels.

(Code 2004, § 38-32; Ord. No. 2011-119-140, § 2, 7-25-2011)

Cross reference— Definitions generally, § 1-2.

Sec. 11-21. - Declaration of findings and policy.

The City Council hereby finds and declares that excessive sound is a serious hazard to the public health, welfare, peace and safety and the quality of life; that a substantial body of science and technology exists by which excessive sound may be substantially abated; that the people have a right to and should be ensured an environment free from excessive sound that may jeopardize the public health, welfare, peace and safety or degrade the quality of life; and that it is the policy of the City to prevent such excessive sound.

(Code 2004, § 38-33; Ord. No. 2011-119-140, § 2, 7-25-2011)

Sec. 11-22. - Administration and enforcement of article generally.

The sound control program established by this article shall be enforced and administered by the Chief Administrative Officer with the assistance of other City departments as required.

(Code 2004, § 38-34; Ord. No. 2011-119-140, § 2, 7-25-2011)

Sec. 11-23. - Testing of metering devices used to enforce article.

In order to implement and enforce this article effectively, the Chief of Police shall develop and promulgate standards and procedures for testing and validating sound level meters used in the enforcement of this article.

(Code 2004, § 38-35; Ord. No. 2011-119-140, § 2, 7-25-2011)

Sec. 11-24. - Exemptions from article.

No provisions of this article shall apply to:

- (1) The emission of sound for the purpose of alerting persons to the existence of an emergency;
- (2) The emission of sound in the performance of emergency work;
- (3) The emission of sound by an emergency vehicle, as defined by Code of Virginia, § 46.2-920(C), for the purpose of alerting persons to the presence of the emergency vehicle;
- (4) Activities authorized by a permit issued pursuant to Section 11-29;
- (5) Activities for which the regulation of sound has been preempted by Federal law;
- (6) Performances or practices by marching bands, school orchestras or ensembles and similar groups, athletic contests or practices, and other school-funded activities, taking place on the grounds of a school;
- (7) Bells and carillons;
- (8) Activities related to the construction, repair, maintenance, remodeling, demolition, grading or other improvements of or to real property and any structures thereon during daytime hours or during daytime extended hours;
- (9) Gardening, lawn care, tree maintenance or removal, and other landscaping activities during daytime hours;
- (10) Refuse collection and sanitation services during daytime hours or during daytime extended hours; and
- (11) Sound resulting from lawfully permitted fireworks displays occurring during daytime hours.

(Code 2004, § 38-36; Ord. No. 2011-119-140, § 2, 7-25-2011)

Sec. 11-25. - Violations of article.

- (a) A violation of this article shall constitute a Class 4 misdemeanor.
- (b) A second violation of this article within any 12-month period shall constitute a Class 3 misdemeanor.
- (c) A third violation and every additional violation of this article within any 12-month period shall constitute a Class 2 misdemeanor.
- (d) Any person operating or controlling a source of sound shall be guilty of any violation caused by that source. If that person or persons cannot be identified by direct evidence, a court may infer that any owner, tenant, resident or manager physically present on the property where the violation is occurring was operating or controlling the sound source. Such inference may be rebutted by any person so charged.
- (e) In addition to and not in lieu of the penalties prescribed in this section, the City may apply to the Circuit Court for an injunction against the continuing violation of any of the provisions of this article and may seek any other remedy or relief authorized by law.

(Code 2004, § 38-37; Ord. No. 2011-119-140, § 2, 7-25-2011)

Sec. 11-26. - Maximum sound levels in residential zones.

Except as provided or permitted by or pursuant to Sections 11-28 and 11-29, no person shall operate a device in such a manner as to create, or otherwise cause any source of sound to create, excessive sound at any point on the land of another person which is located in a residential zone.

(Code 2004, § 38-38; Ord. No. 2011-119-140, § 2, 7-25-2011)

Sec. 11-27. - Maximum sound levels in multifamily dwellings or mixed use structures.

Except as provided or permitted by or pursuant to Sections 11-28 and 11-29, no person shall operate a device in such a manner as to create, or otherwise cause any source of sound to create, excessive sound in the residence of another person which is located in a multifamily dwelling or mixed use structure when measured at a point at least four feet from the wall, ceiling or floor nearest the sound source, regardless of whether the residence is located in a residential zone.

(Code 2004, § 38-39; Ord. No. 2011-119-140, § 2, 7-25-2011)

Sec. 11-28. - Maximum level of sound emitted by motor vehicles.

(a) No person shall operate or cause to be operated a motor vehicle or motorcycle on a public right-of-way at any time in such a manner that the level of sound emitted by the motor vehicle or motorcycle, when measured at a distance of at least 50 feet, exceeds the level set forth in the following table:

Vehicle Class	Sound Level in dBA	
	Speed Limit 35 MPH or Less	Speed Limit over 35 MPH
All motor vehicles of GVWR or GCWR of 6,000 lbs. or more	86	90
Any motorcycle	82	86
Any other motor vehicle or any combination of vehicles towed by any motor vehicle	76	82

This subsection shall not apply to any motor carrier vehicle engaged in interstate commerce.

(b) It shall be unlawful for any person to play, use or operate, or permit the playing, use or operation of, any electronic device or horn used for the amplification of sound, which is located within a motor vehicle being operated or parked on public or private property within the City, including any public or private street or alley, in such a manner as to be plainly audible to the human ear at a distance of at least 50 feet from the vehicle in which it is located.

(Code 2004, § 38-40; Ord. No. 2011-119-140, § 2, 7-25-2011)

Cross reference— Traffic and vehicles, Ch. 27.

Sec. 11-29. - Permit for use of loudspeakers on vehicles or mercantile establishments.

- (a) No person shall use any mechanical loudspeaker or amplifier on any motor vehicle or other moving vehicle or on the exterior of any mercantile establishment, for advertising or other purposes, such that it is plainly audible on the property of another person, without first obtaining a permit from the Chief Administrative Officer or the designee thereof. Each application for a permit pursuant to this section shall be accompanied by payment of a fee in the amount set forth in Appendix A to this Code.
- (b) Whenever the Chief Administrative Officer or the designee thereof determines that the use of mechanical loudspeakers or amplifiers on motor vehicles or other moving vehicles or on the exterior of any mercantile establishment, for advertising or other purposes, will not create excessive sound on the property of another person, the Chief Administrative Officer or the designee thereof shall grant a permit.
- (c) Nothing contained in this article shall be construed to relieve any person operating or causing a motor vehicle or other moving vehicle on which is situated any mechanical loudspeaker or amplifier to be operated in the City of obtaining the license and paying the license tax prescribed by Section 26-929.

(Code 2004, § 38-41; Ord. No. 2011-119-140, § 2, 7-25-2011; Ord. No. 2012-67-44, § 1, 4-23-2012)

Cross reference— Advertising practices, § 6-123 et seq.

Sec. 11-30. - Noisy animals and birds.

No person shall allow any animal or bird to create sound such that it is plainly audible at least once a minute for ten consecutive minutes:

- (1) Inside the confines of the dwelling unit, house or apartment of another; or
- (2) At least 50 feet from the animal or bird.

(Code 2004, § 38-42; Ord. No. 2011-119-140, § 2, 7-25-2011)

Sec. 11-31. - Severability.

A determination of invalidity or unconstitutionality by a court of competent jurisdiction of any clause, sentence, paragraph, section or part of this article shall not affect the validity of the remaining parts thereto.

(Code 2004, § 38-43; Ord. No. 2011-119-140, § 2, 7-25-2011)

Secs. 11-32—11-50. - Reserved.