

Chapter 125

NOISE

§ 125-1. Intent and purpose.

§ 125-2. Title.

§ 125-3. Definitions.

§ 125-4. Prohibited acts.

§ 125-5. Sound level by zoning districts.

§ 125-6. Exemptions.

§ 125-7. Variances and Noise Control Board.

§ 125-8. Enforcement; violations and penalties.

[HISTORY: Adopted by the Council of the Borough of Berwick 10-18-1999 by Ord. No. 99-3. Amendments noted where applicable.]

GENERAL REFERENCES

Dogs and other animals — See Ch. 82.

Engine brakes — See Ch. 89.

Firearms — See Ch. 99.

Motorcycles — See Ch. 123.

Peddling and soliciting — See Ch. 133.

Vehicles and traffic — See Ch. 158.

§ 125-1. Intent and purpose.

The Council of the Borough of Berwick, finding that excessive levels of sound are detrimental to the physical, mental and social well-being of the people as well as to their comfort, living conditions, general welfare and safety and being therefore a public health and welfare hazard, hereby declares it to be necessary to provide for the greater control and more effective regulation of excessive sound and the sources of excessive sound within the Borough of Berwick.

§ 125-2. Title.

This chapter shall be known as the Borough of Berwick "Noise Control Ordinance."

§ 125-3. Definitions.

The following words, terms and phrases when used in this chapter shall have the meanings ascribed to them in this section, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning. All terminology used in this chapter, not defined below, shall be in conformance with the applicable publications of the American National Standards Institute [ANSI S1.1—1960 (R1971) and its revisions] or its successor body.

AMBIENT NOISE — The all-encompassing noise associated with a given environment, being usually a composite of sounds from many sources near and far.

A-WEIGHTED SOUND LEVEL — The sound pressure level in decibels as measured on a sound level meter using the A-weighting network. The level so read is designated db(A).

CONSTRUCTION OPERATION — The erection, repair, renovation, demolition or removal of any building or structure; and the excavation, filling, grading and regulation of lots in connection therewith.

DECIBEL (dB) — A unit for measuring the sound pressure level, equal to 20 times the logarithm to the base 10 of the ratio of the pressure of the sound measured to the reference pressure, which is 20 micropascals (20 micronewtons per square meter).

EMERGENCY — Any occurrence or set of circumstances involving actual or imminent physical trauma or property damage.

EMERGENCY WORK — Any work performed for the purpose of preventing or alleviating the physical trauma or property damage threatened or caused by an emergency.

IMPULSIVE SOUND — Sound of short duration, usually less than one second, with an abrupt onset and rapid decay. Examples of impulsive sound include explosions, drop forge impacts and the discharge of firearms.

MUFFLER or SOUND DISSIPATIVE DEVICE — A device designed or used for decreasing or abating the level of sound escaping from an engine or machinery system.

NOISE — Any sound which annoys or disturbs humans or which causes an adverse psychological or physiological effect on humans.

NOISE DISTURBANCE — Any sound which:

- A. Endangers or injures the safety or health of humans or animals; or
- B. Annoys or disturbs a reasonable person of normal sensitivities; or
- C. Endangers or injures personal or real property; or
- D. Is in excess of the sound level by zoning districts established in § 125-5.

PERSON — Any individual, association, partnership or corporation, and includes any officer, employee, department, agency or instrumentality of a state or any political subdivision of a state. Whenever used in any clause prescribing and imposing a penalty, "person" includes the individual members, partners, officers and managers, or any of them, of partnerships and associations, and as to corporations, the officers and managers thereof or any of them.

POWERED MODEL VEHICLE — Any self-propelled airborne, waterborne or landborne plane, vessel or vehicle which is not designed to carry persons, including but not limited to model airplane, boat, car or rocket.

PROPERTY LINE (BOUNDARY) — An imaginary line drawn through the points of contact of adjoining lands, apartments, condominiums, townhouses and duplexes owned, rented or leased by different persons, a demarcation or a line of separation of properties, and also, for any two or more buildings sharing common grounds, the line drawn midway between any two said buildings. All areas devoted to public right-of-way shall be deemed to be across the property line. For the purpose of this regulation, the property line includes all points on a plane formed by projecting the property line in a manner deemed appropriate by the enforcing police officer.

PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY — Any street, avenue, boulevard, highway, sidewalk, alley or similar place which is owned or controlled by a governmental entity.

PUBLIC SPACE — Any real property or structure thereon which are owned or controlled by a governmental entity.

PURE TONE — Any sound which can be heard as a single pitch or a set of single pitches. For the purpose of this chapter, a pure tone shall exist if the $\frac{1}{3}$ octave band sound pressure level in the band with the tone exceeds the arithmetic average of the sound pressure levels of the two contiguous octave bands by 15 dB for center frequencies of 500 Hz and above and by 8dB for center frequencies between 160 and 400 Hz and by 5dB for center frequencies less than or equal to 125 Hz.

REAL PROPERTY — All land, whether publicly or privately owned, whether improved or not improved, with or without structures, exclusive of any areas devoted to public right-of-way.

SOUND — 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, or the superposition of such propagated oscillation which evokes an auditory sensation. The description of sound may include any characteristics of such sound, including duration, intensity and frequency.

SOUND LEVEL — The weighted sound pressure level obtained by the use of a sound level meter and frequency weighing network, such as A, B or C, as specified in American National Standards Institute specifications for sound level meters (ANSI S.4-1971, or the latest revision thereof). If the frequency weighing employed is not indicated, the A-weighing shall apply.

SOUND LEVEL METER — An instrument which includes a microphone, amplifier, RMS detector, integrator or time averager, output meter and any applicable weighing network used to measure sound pressure levels which meets or exceeds the requirements for a Type I or Type II sound level meter as specified in ANSI Specification S1.4-1971. The manufacturer's published indication of such specifications shall be prima facie evidence of such amendments.

ZONING DISTRICTS — The land use districts established by the Zoning Ordinance of the Borough of Berwick, and all subsequent amendments.

§ 125-4. Prohibited acts.

- A. Noise disturbance prohibited. No person shall make, continue or cause to be made or continued any noise disturbance, nor shall any person suffer, allow or permit any noise disturbance to be made or continued from or at any property, whether real or personal, that is subject to such person's right to control.
- B. Specific prohibitions. The following acts, and the causing thereof, are declared to be noise disturbances and therefore in violation of this chapter:
 - (1) Radios, television sets, musical instruments and similar devices. Operating, playing or permitting the operation or playing of any radio, television, phonograph, drum,

musical instrument, sound amplifier, automobile radio, automobile stereo or high-fidelity equipment or similar device which produces, reproduces or amplifies sound:

- (a) At any time in such a manner as to cause a noise disturbance across a property line (boundary) or between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. so as to be plainly audible across a property line (boundary); or
 - (b) In such a manner as to create a noise disturbance across a property line (boundary) or at 50 feet from such device, whichever is less, when the device is operated in or on a motor vehicle, or hand carried, on a public right-of-way or public space; or
 - (c) In such a manner as to create a noise disturbance to any person other than the operator of the device, when operated by any passenger or a common carrier.
- (2) Yelling and shouting, etc. Engaging in loud or raucous yelling, shouting, hooting, whistling or singing on the public streets between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.; or at any time or place in such a manner as to create a noise disturbance.
- (3) Construction. Operating or permitting the operation of any tools or equipment used in construction operations, drilling or demolition work:
- (a) Between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. the following day on weekdays and Saturdays or at any time on Sundays or legal holidays, such that the sound therefrom creates a noise disturbance across a residential real property line (boundary), except for emergency work.
 - (b) At any other time such that the sound level at or across a real property line (boundary) exceeds 85 dB(A) for a period of one hour.
 - (c) This section shall not apply to the use of domestic power tools subject to § 125-4B(4).
- (4) Domestic power tools. Operating or permitting the operation of any mechanically powered saw, drill, sander, grinder, lawn or garden tool, snowblower or similar device used outdoors in residential areas (see Table I in § 125-5A) between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. so as to cause a noise disturbance across a residential property line (boundary).
- (5) Loading and unloading. Loading, unloading, opening, closing or other handling of boxes, crates, containers, building materials, garbage cans or similar objects between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. the following day in such a manner as to cause a noise disturbance across a residential property line (boundary). This section shall not apply to municipal or utility services in or about the public right-of-way.
- (6) Animals and birds. Owning, possessing, harboring or controlling any animals or bird which howls, barks, meows, squawks or makes other sounds continuously and/or incessantly for a period of 10 minutes or makes such noise intermittently for ½ hour or more to the disturbance of any person at any time of the day or night regardless of whether the animal or bird is situated in or upon private property; provided, however, that at the time the animal or bird is making such noise, no person is trespassing or

threatening to trespass upon private property in or upon which the animal or bird is situated or for any other legitimate cause which teased or provoked the animal or bird.

- (7) Powered model vehicles. Operating or permitting the operation of powered model vehicles so as to create a noise disturbance across a residential property line (boundary) between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.
- (8) Street sales. Offering for sale or selling by shouting or outcry or by any other amplified or unamplified sound within any residential or commercial area (see Table I in § 125-5A) of the Borough of Berwick except between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. and at no time in such a manner as to violate § 125-5A of this chapter.
- (9) Tampering. The following acts or the causing thereof are prohibited.
 - (a) The removal or rendering inoperative by any person other than for the purposes of maintenance, repair or replacement of any muffler or sound dissipative device or element of design or noise label of any product.
 - (b) The intentional moving or rendering inaccurate or inoperative of any sound monitoring instrument or device positioned by or for the Bureau of Police, provided that such device or the immediate area is clearly labeled in accordance with noise control regulations to warn of the potential illegality.
 - (c) The use of a product which has had a muffler or sound dissipative device or element of design or noise label removed or rendered inoperative, with knowledge that such action has occurred.
- (10) Vehicle, motorboat or aircraft repairs and testing. Repairing, rebuilding or testing any motor vehicle, motorcycle, motorboat or aircraft in such a manner as to cause a noise disturbance across a residential real property line (boundary).

C. Motor vehicle prohibitions.

- (1) Motor vehicle and motorcycles on public rights-of-way. No person shall operate or cause to be operated a public or private motor vehicle or motorcycle, or any equipment attached to such a vehicle, on a public right-of-way at any time in such a manner that the sound level emitted by the motor vehicle or motorcycle, or any equipment attached to such a vehicle, exceeds the level set forth in Title 67, or the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Regulations (Established Sound Levels).
- (2) Standing motor vehicles. No person shall operate or permit the operation of any motor vehicle or any auxiliary equipment attached to such a vehicle, for a period longer than 15 minutes in any hour while the vehicle is stationary, for reasons other than traffic congestion, anywhere within 150 feet of any residence in such a manner as to cause a noise disturbance across a residential property line (boundary).
- (3) Unnecessary horn blowing. No person shall at any time sound the horn or other warning device of a vehicle except when absolutely necessary as a warning while actually driving such vehicle.
- (4) Sound trucks. No person shall operate sound amplifying equipment mounted on or attached to any motor vehicle at any time in such a manner as to exceed the maximum permissible motor vehicle noise emissions as set forth in § 125-5C(1) of this chapter.

- D. **Prima facie violation.** The noise from any of the aforesaid prohibited acts that disturbs two or more residents who are in general agreement as to the times and durations of the noise and who reside in separate residences (including apartments and condominiums) located across a property line (boundary) from the property on which the source of the noise is generated shall be prima facie evidence of a noise disturbance.

§ 125-5. Sound level by zoning districts.

- A. **Maximum permissible sound levels by zoning districts.** No person shall operate or cause to be operated any source of sound in such a manner as to create a sound level which exceeds the limits set forth in the zoning designations category in Table I when measured at or across the property line (boundary) from the noise source. Any sound source that produces sound in excess of those levels shall constitute a noise disturbance.

**TABLE I
SOUND LEVELS BY ZONING DISTRICTS**

| Zoning District of the Property on Which the Source of the Noise is Located | Sound Level Limit, db(a) | |
|--|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| | 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. | 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. |
| Residential and Conservation (Zoning Districts R-1, R-2, R-3 and OS) | 57 | 52 |
| Commercial (Zoning Districts C-1, C-2, C-3) | 67 | 62 |
| Industrial (Zoning Districts I-1, I-2) | 77 | 77 |

- B. **When exceeded.** The sound level limits set forth in Table I shall be exceeded when any one or more of the following occur:
- (1) The sound at any one point in time exceeds any of the established zone limits in Table I by a measured sound level of 15 dB(A); or
 - (2) The sound exceeds any of the established zone limits in Table I by a measured sound level of 10 dB(A) for a cumulative total of one minute or more out of any ten-minute period; or
 - (3) The sound exceeds, except in the Industrial Districts, any of the established zone limits in Table I by a measured sound level of three dB(a) continually for a period of five minutes, or a total of five minutes out of any ten-minute period.
- C. **Ambient sound.** In the event the background ambient sound levels in an area of suspected noise disturbance exceed the levels set forth in Table I, the sound level of the intrusive sound source shall be measured with the ambient background sound level being substituted as the Table I sound level limit.
- D. **Where measured.** For the purpose of this section, sound shall be measured at or beyond the property line (boundary) of the property on which the noise source is located.

- E. Pure tone and impulsive sound. For any source of sound which emits a pure tone or impulsive sound, the limits set forth in Table I shall be reduced by five dB(A).
- F. Adjustment for nonconforming uses. Any noise which occurs on property which, according to the Borough of Berwick Zoning Code, is being used in a legally nonconforming manner, and which noise relates to said use, shall be judged as if the property bore a zoning designation under which the use would be conforming.
- G. Measuring instruments. All sound measurements shall be made on a sound level meter calibrated in the manner required by the manufacturer's specifications.
- H. Exemptions from sound level limits. The provisions of this § 125-5 shall not apply to:
 - (1) Activities covered by the following sections: § 125-4B(3), Construction, § 125-4B(4), Domestic power tools, or any emergency signaling device used because of an emergency;
 - (2) Interstate railway locomotives and cars;
 - (3) Motor vehicles.

§ 125-6. Exemptions.

The following sounds are exempted from the provisions of this chapter:

- A. Amplified announcements. Electronically amplified announcements at athletic events.
- B. Blasting. Blasting, under permit by the Borough of Berwick. Such blasting may occur only between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, unless specifically authorized by permit.
- C. Concerts, etc. Band concerts, block parties, church carnivals or other performances or similar activities publicly or privately sponsored and presented in any public or private space outdoors shall be exempt from the provisions of this chapter, provided that:
 - (1) Such activities do not produce sound 15 dB(a) in excess of the sound levels set forth in Table I of § 125-5A of this chapter; and
 - (2) Such activities do not occur between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.
- D. Emergency work. Sounds caused by the performance of emergency work or by the ordinary and accepted use of emergency apparatus and equipment.
- E. Municipal and utility services. Sounds resulting from the repair or replacement of any municipal or utility installation in or about the public right-of-way.
- F. School and public activities. Sounds not electronically amplified, created by organized school-related programs, activities, athletic and entertainment events, or other public programs, activities or events; other than motor vehicle racing events.
- G. Warning devices. Sounds made by warning devices operating continuously for three minutes or less; except that in the event of an actual emergency, the time limitation shall not apply.

§ 125-7. Variances and Noise Control Board.**A. Variances.**

- (1) **Authority.** The Noise Control Board shall have the authority to grant variances, consistent with the provisions of this section, after public hearing, upon application of any person who owns, controls or operates any sound source which does not comply with the provisions or standards of this chapter.
- (2) **Application.** The application shall state the standard or provision from which the variance is being sought and the period of time and reasons for which the variance is sought and shall contain information which demonstrates that bringing the sources of sound or activity for which the variance is sought into compliance with this chapter would constitute an unreasonable hardship on the applicant and shall contain any other supporting information which may reasonably be required.
- (3) **Public notification.** Notice of the application and the date, time and place of the hearing to be held thereon for a variance shall be given by publishing notice thereof in a newspaper of general circulation in the borough at least once, and not less than three days prior to the scheduled public hearing and by, if practicable, conspicuously posting the premises that is the source of the sound for which the variance is sought.
- (4) **Hearing.** The Noise Control Board shall hold a hearing to decide variance applications presented to it. Any person who claims to be affected by the sound source or by the variance may be present and may present testimony either in support of or against the requested variance.
- (5) **Review standards.** In determining whether to grant or deny the application, the Noise Control Board shall balance the hardship to the applicant versus the adverse impact to the public health, safety and welfare and shall consider at a minimum the following conditions:
 - (a) The physical characteristics of the emitted sound;
 - (b) The times and duration of the emitted sound;
 - (c) The geography, zone and population density of the affected area;
 - (d) Whether the public health and safety is endangered;
 - (e) Whether the sound source predated the receivers; and
 - (f) Whether compliance with the standards from which the variance is sought would produce hardship without equal or greater benefit to the public.
- (6) **Decision.** The Noise Control Board shall render a written decision in granting or denying the application for variance and, if denied, shall state the reasons therefor. The Board's decision shall be made available to the applicant and any other person who requests it in writing. In granting a variance, the Hearing Board may attach reasonable conditions, including but not limited to placing a time limit on the permitted activity and/or establishing a time schedule within which the source of sound or activity for which the variance was sought must be brought into compliance with this chapter. Where the grant of a variance is conditioned, the variance shall not

become effective until all conditions are agreed to by the applicant. Noncompliance with any condition of the variance shall terminate it and subject the person holding it to those provisions of this chapter regulating the source of sound or activity for which the variance was granted. Variances may be granted for a period of up to one year. The person obtaining the variance may reapply for additional variance periods under terms set forth by the applicant and the Noise Control Board.

- (7) Appeals. Appeal from an adverse decision of the Noise Control Board shall be made to the Court of Common Pleas of Columbia County.
- B. Special variances. The Chief of the Bureau of Police or his designee may, upon application and guided by the 17 standards for review set forth in § 125-7A(5), grant special variances for infrequent events or activities which do not exceed 24 hours in duration. Such special variances are not renewable except by action of the Noise Control Board pursuant to § 125-7A. The Noise Control Board shall hear and decide all appeals from the denial of a special variance, the practice and procedure thereon to be in accordance with § 125-7A.
- C. Noise Control Board. The Noise Control Board for the purposes of this chapter shall be the Zoning Hearing Board of the Borough of Berwick, which Board shall have full authority to carry out the duties of the Noise Control Board, as set forth in this chapter. All applications to the Board shall be filed through the Zoning Officer and shall be accompanied by an application fee of \$150. The hearing shall be held not more than 30 days following the filing of the application and the decision thereon rendered within 45 days of the last hearing in the case before the Board. Failure to comply with the time constraints of this section shall not result in a deemed decision in favor of the applicant.

§ 125-8. Enforcement; violations and penalties.

- A. Authority for enforcement. This chapter shall be enforced by the Bureau of Police of the Borough of Berwick.
- B. Penalties.
 - (1) Any person violating any provisions of this chapter shall, upon conviction thereof, in a summary proceeding, be sentenced to pay a fine of not more than \$300 for each and every offense, to be collected as other fines and costs are by law collectible, or shall be imprisoned for not more than 90 days, or both. Each day during which any person violates any provision of this chapter shall constitute a separate offense.
 - (2) This chapter and the foregoing penalties shall not be construed to limit or deny the right of the borough or any person to such equitable or other remedies as may otherwise be available with or without process of law.

