

# Living with low frequency noise

“ TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

‘It was with great pleasure that my dear friend brought you to my attention yesterday. She printed for me a copy of a paragraph entitled “A Questionnaire Survey of Infrasound and Low-Frequency Noise” by Henrik Moller and Morten Lydolf. I have been exposed to Low Frequency Noise resonating out of our interior house walls for seven straight months 24 hours a day. I am disabled and spend most of my time indoors. The sensation I have been trying to describe to people for the past seven months was not understood by anyone. Finally I found a mechanical engineer who related to my description and when I read your article it was exactly what I had been trying to relay to anyone who would listen.

Is there substantial proof as to the health risks involved with such frequencies? My health has deteriorated drastically in the last seven months and I don’t know where to go for help. The medical doctors don’t seem to have any knowledge of such problems. Do you know of anyone in San Diego, California, USA who is familiar with low frequency and the damage it can cause to humans?

I thank you for your time in reading my letter. I’m hoping you might be able to help me with this dilemma.

Sincerely,

Jo Anna W.”

## Jenny’s story

“ I have had a problem with low frequency noise for the past 5 years, and I believe I know the source, but there are several items of machinery which we cannot pin it down to. We have taken hundreds of readings, with a Norsonic monitor borrowed from the council, but are having difficulty in tracking down the actual piece of equipment.

I am at my wits end, and cannot “function” properly. I work in an extremely pressurised environment, and if I cannot perform my work, I am worried I could lose my job which I have held for 12 years at the same firm. They are aware of when the problem started, and “wind me up” all the time”) All of this started when a golf club was built about 200 yards from my home in September 1997, and I have not had a single proper night’s sleep since then (except when I am away). The readings we have taken indicate that there is a problem in our property, but I can also hear this outside of our property in the garden sometimes. Whenever we leave the property/garden the noise

*If you've heard of things like the Bristol Hum, and you're vaguely aware of low frequency noise as a bit of a problem, read this and see what life's really like for a sufferer*

disappears. There are 6 other properties in the vicinity; some people can hear something, others cannot. My husband, who has very good hearing, thinks it sounds like a diesel pump, and he can actually hear it stop and start and “hiccup”. Unfortunately all I can “feel” is intense pressure in my ears, and sometimes an “idling” sound which only ceases if I put earplugs very tightly in my ears. My daughter, who is 25 can hear it (but not at the very low frequency of 12Hz which is what is troubling me”. She also says it sounds like a lorry “idling” all day outside the house, when she is at home.

I am writing to you in the hope that you can give me any assistance in resolving this problem; we have spent 15 years of our lives renovating our home, but will have to move as I cannot tolerate it any more. I may rent out a studio flat while my husband tries to resolve the problem, but it is making him ill too, as he is also trying to hold down his job, while being “left to it” by the council, to carry out the research himself.

I look forward to hearing from you. ”

### Testing the rules

Barking dogs, loud air conditioners and neighbours practising drums at 3am were among the reasons local councils from across western New South Wales gathered in Dubbo recently. Behind air pollution and odour, neighbourhood noise attracts the most complaints to local councils. So council representatives got together to discuss a new draft of the Environmental Protection Agency’s Noise Guide for Local Councils. “The draft is a document that covers the legislative rights and responsibilities councils have to control noise in their area,” EPA central west manager Richard Whyte said. “It contains the range of rules about noise and seven solid case studies of real situations to put them into context.” The conference was designed for the EPA to gauge the response of local councils towards the draft and gain input for the final guide. “What we are doing is seeking local council’s feedback so the final document becomes a useful one,” Mr Whyte said. Dubbo City Council environment and health services supervisor Ray Doyle welcomed the introduction of the guide, saying he received 300 to 400 complaints every year with the majority relating to noise. “The draft already looks highly useful,” Mr Doyle said. “It brings together all the information and tools we need to control noise problems. It will help us enforce the rules with new ideas, it goes through all the formal processes for giving out notices and includes all our options in a document you can readily refer to.” The majority of complaints Mr Doyle fields are domestic related and he said they were often easily overcome with mediation.

## noise notes

### Noise flagged up

A Chesterfield, Michigan, resident has been given a ticket for violating the local noise ordinance. The specific cause was the noise of his flag outside his house, flapping in the 40mph wind. A neighbour had complained that the noise was keeping him awake. Flag owner Ray Saelens is protesting, in a novel defense of noise that “the noise of that flag is the voices of all the people who died fighting for the flag!

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