

noise notes

volume 4 number 1

in this issue...

Tread softly, neighbour	3
Engine test cell noise emission design with performance validation results	4
A generic model for evaluating the performance of base-isolated buildings	13
Annoyance of low frequency noise (LFN) in the laboratory assessed by LFN-sufferers and non-sufferers	25
Problems of measurement and evaluation of low-frequency noise in residential buildings in the light of recommendations and the new European standards	34

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ISSN 1475-4738

noise notes is published quarterly by
Multi-Science Publishing Co. Ltd.

5 Wates Way, Brentwood, Essex, UK

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email: mscience@globalnet.co.uk · ©Multi-Science Publishing Co. Ltd.

Tread softly, neighbour

First, the few days of banging from the flat above, now thankfully over, but followed by the thump, thump, clip-clop of footsteps whenever they walk around. Yes, the young couple up there have gone trendy, ripped out the old impact-cushioning carpets, and put down the latest in laminated wood floors. Clean for the children to play on, but so noisy for those below. It's happening everywhere. Just look at the piled-up fake-wood laminates in the DIY stores for those who can't afford anything better. Or the adverts in the up-market magazines for the lucky few who aspire to "real wood".

Restaurants have gone minimalist. At least, they've chosen the bit which suits them. Hard, easy-to-clean floors, hard walls and ceilings. But they neglect the spacious "emptiness" of true minimalism and crowd in the usual number of tables, resulting in noise levels well over 80dB, generated by voices competing hard to be heard above the others. It's a struggle communicating across the table, unless you are a lip reader, whilst there's real concern about noise exposure of waiters.

Other developments have also increased problems of noise. Cheap night time electricity is an incentive to run washing machines and dishwashers in the early hours. "Home cinema" puts hundreds of watts of power amplification into inadequately sound insulated properties, whilst intruder alarms give so many false responses that they are ignored.

Advice is needed. Resilient underlays are available for wood, sold for use on uneven base floors, rather than for the unspecified noise reduction which they might give. Attention must be given to educating the public, and the professional installers, on how to reduce noise from their trendy new floors.

And it shouldn't stop at that. What is really needed is a study of what causes noise in the home, both to yourselves and your neighbours, from developments old and new. Followed by advice on how to reduce the noise including codes of practice on installation and use of those things which are intended to make life better for us, but also have their down side.

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Sydney faces 'Aircraft Noise Hell', warns ALP

More than a million residents would be severely affected by aircraft noise under a new master plan for Sydney airport, the Australian Labour Party claim. Anthony Albanese, the federal Opposition frontbencher and member for the inner-Sydney seat of Grayndler, predicted the plan would result in the demolition of suburbs like Sydenham and Marrickville. He said the number of passengers entering Australia would rise to 68 million over the next 20 years, up from 23 million in 2001-02, while aircraft movements would be up from 225,200 a year to 412,000 a year. "Quite frankly, this plan spells aircraft noise hell for Sydney," Mr Albanese told reporters. "The whole area of Sydney will be affected by massive aircraft noise with more than one million residents severely affected. But federal government backbencher Bruce Baird, whose electorate of Cook adjoins Sydney airport, said the latest polling he had received showed only one per cent of his electorate was concerned about aircraft noise.