Noise Control – and You

But laws aren't enough to solve the noise problem. You might think the problem is too big to tackle individually, but since we all contribute to the noise problem, we can all be part of the solution. Some solutions may be difficult, others quite simple; but few will work if we don't get involved.

How do we start? We need to become aware of where the noise comes from and what harm it does. We need to make our local government officials aware that we are upset about noise. We should push for enforcement of noise laws already on the books and, if needed, offer our support for new ones.

In our own neighborhoods, we can make a difference. Discuss the problem with your neighbors and friends, Make it a community goal to reduce noise in your area, Investigate the possibility of rerouting trucks away from residential neighborhoods. Give serious consideration to asking that proposed highways be relocated so they skirt residential areas instead of going through thom. Residents of several cities have achieved positive results in reducing noise this way.

 In Baltimore, neighborhood residents were successful in getting large trucks off the narrowest side streets;

 In Seattle and other cities, programs have been adopted to prevent unnecessary use of sirens by ambulances and other public vehicles;

 The Bedford-Stuyvesant Community Development Corporation in New York and the Chicago Housing Authority sponsor voluntary gardening programs. In Brooklyn, the program has been expanded to tree and shrubbery planting to create open green space in areas where upandoned buildings have been torn down.

In California, another simple and inexpensive soundreducing technique was demonstrated at the Oakland airport, when the airport authority simply rerouted its noislest aircraft from the north runway to its south runway so that the most trouble some aircraft would take off over the San Francisco Bay rather than over a residential neighborhood. As simple as that solution counds, the airport managers had not even considered that change in the past, simply because they had been told that they did not have the authority to do anything about noise.

Noise in the central city can be controlled and reduced. Other cities and neighborhoods are doing somothing about it and you can too. The city may never be as quiet as the countryside, but we can do a tot toward making it a healthier, more pleasant place to livo.

This is one in a series of EPA booklets on public constituencies and the environment.

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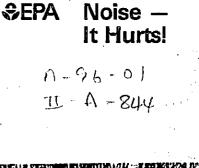
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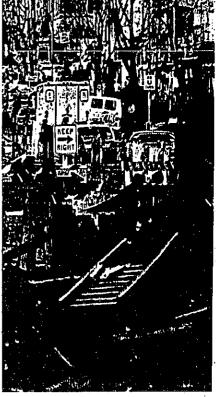
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The central city. A place where many people live, but also a place many others only pass through on their way to and from work. Commuters come and go in cars, trains, buses, and on motorcycles. The sounds of their passing – roaring engines, screeching thres, blaring horns, and the rumble of steel wheels – echo off the closely-packed buildings.

These sounds mingle with those of the working world — trucks, elevated trains, construction equipment, industrial machines, factories, and the banging of trash cans. Ambulances, fire and police sirens add to the din. Loud music blares from stores, bars, tavens, and discos, often fate into the night.

The problem is worsened by the tack of landscape in the central city neighborhood. There are few soundmuffling trees and shrubs, and even fewer expanses of greenery, only concrete buildings and asphalt streets. The result of all this? NOISEI

Noise is a fact of life in the central city. Unhealthy, Irritating, and constant noise degrades the quality of life for people living in the city's core. Unlike suburbanites who come into town to work and than leave at day's end for the quiet of their neighborhoods, the residents of the central city are surrounded by noise day and night. For them, it is an especially difficult problem.

But it doesn't have to be that way - with some common sense, and a community effort, noise problems can be controlled.

Noise Effects

We tend to think of noise as the price we must pay for living in the modern world. Though we seem to adjust to noise by Ignoring it, this is not the case. The ear never closes, and the body responds to noise in our sleep. Day or night, anytime noise irritates or annoys us, we should consider it a warning that other things are happening to us, some of which may be harmful to our hualth.

The most obvious effect of noise is hearing loss. Hearing loss due to noise is usually gradual, it happens little by little, and slowly reduces the ability of people to communicate with each other. Unfortunately, by the time the damage has occurrud, it is too late to recover what has been lost. There is no cure. Hearing aids cannot restore noise-damaged hearing, although they can be of limited help to some people.

Be of limited help to some people. Don't make the mistake of thinking that hearing loss is caused only by industrial noise. Noise load enough to cause hearing loss is almost everywhere in the city. When people have to raise their voices to be heard, the background noise may be injurious.

In Chicago, the Jackson Park "El", operated around the clack, passes within feet of some apartment buildings, ganerating noise the equivalent of one person shouling in another's ear. Noise also leads to stress, and city residents suffer from it as much or more than anyone else. Sudden losses of tempur, sleeplessness, Irritability, depression, aggressive and hostile behavior are common, but sometimes unidentified, symptoms of noise-induced stress.

Noiso particularly affects children growing up in the central city because it reduces their ability to learn. Their concentration is easily interrupted by noise, and during the early school years, a child's capacity to read and pronounce words may be seriously impaired by continuous exposure to noise. Sadly, children have few chances of escaping noise in urban neighborhoods whether at home, play, or school.

whether at home, play, or school, Old and young alike react to noise. Blood pressure rises, heart rate and breathing speed up, muscles tonse, hormones are released into the blood-stream. These changes occur to persons both awake and sleeping, and noise does not have to be loud to set them off.

Hearing loss, learning problems, stress, body changes, all are problems arising from noise.

Noise Control

Most noise problems can be solved. Many State and local governments already have noise ordinances and "public nuisance" laws. But usually these ordinances stan't enforced. Either the wording of the laws is too yague or local officials don't think it's that important. Since 1972, when the first national noise control law

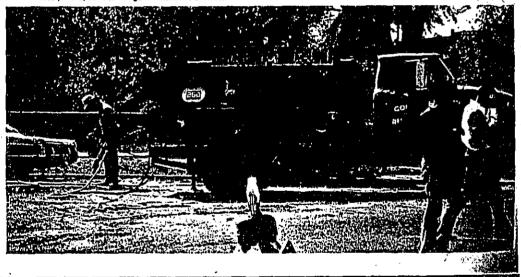
was passed, the Federal government has been involved

In noise control. The U.S. Environmental Protection on Agency (EPA) is responsible for setting noise limits for, trains, trucks, machinery and many other sources of loud, harmful noiso. EPA will soon be requiring noise. labels on consumer products that will enable you to compare the loudness of appliances before you buy them. The Agency also provides assistance to State and local governments in setting up noise control programs — an area that will now receive a greater em-l, phasis.

On November 8th, 1978, the President signed the Quiet Communities Act of 1978. This law directs EPA to greatly increase the assistance it provides to State and localities in developing and carrying out their own noise control programs based on local needs.

The Agency will be expanding the help it now gives to communities under the ECHO (Each Community Helps Others) and Quiet Communities Programs. Under ECHO, communities that aiready have established noise abatement programs help others in setting up programs. Under the Quiet Communities Program EPA helps a community develop a comprehensive, offective noise abatement programs tailored to local needs. All segments of the communities are involved; local officials, business goups, civic groups and individual citizans.

Although EPA is not directly responsible for controlling aircraft noise, the Agency does recommend aircraft noise regulations to the Foderal Aviation Administration.



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