



Chapter 7: Noise Element

Definitions

Following is a list of commonly used terms and abbreviations that may be found within this element or when discussing the topic of noise. This is an abbreviated glossary to be reviewed prior to reading the element. It is important to become familiar with the definitions listed in order to better understand the importance of the Noise Element within the County of Riverside General Plan. Since the disbanding of the State Office of Noise Control in the mid-1990, the State of California Office of Planning and Research General Plan Guidelines can offer further information on other noise-related resources.

Ambient Noise: The composite of noise from all sources near and far. In this context, the ambient noise level constitutes the normal or existing level of environmental noise at a given location.

CNEL (Community Noise Equivalent Level): The average equivalent A-weighted sound level during a 24-hour day, obtained after addition of five decibels to sound levels in the evening from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. and after the addition of 10 decibels to sound levels in the night from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.

dB (Decibel): The unit of measure that denotes the ratio between two quantities that are proportional to power; the number of decibels corresponding to the ratio of the two amounts of power is based on a logarithmic scale.

dba (A-weighted decibel): The A-weighted decibel scale discriminates upper and lower frequencies in a manner approximating the sensitivity of the human ear. The scale is based on a reference pressure level of 20 micropascals.

Intrusive Noise: That noise which intrudes over and above the existing ambient noise at a given location. The relative intrusiveness of a sound depends upon its amplitude, duration, frequency and time of occurrence, and tonal or informational content as well as the prevailing noise level.

L₁₀: The A-weighted sound level exceeded ten percent of the sample time. Similarly, L₅₀, L₉₀, etc.

L_{eq} (Equivalent energy level): The average acoustic energy content of noise during the time it lasts. The L_{eq} of a time-varying noise and that of a steady noise are the same if they deliver the same acoustic energy to the ear during exposure, no matter what time of day they occur. The County of Riverside uses a 10-minute L_{eq} measurement.

L_{dn} (Day-Night Average Level): The average equivalent A-weighted sound level during a 24-hour day, obtained after addition of 10 decibels to sound levels in the night from 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. Note: CNEL and L_{dn} represent daily levels of noise exposure averaged on an annual or daily basis, while L_{eq}



The level of sound that impacts a property varies greatly during the day. As an example, the sound near an airport may be relatively quiet when no airplane is taking off or landing, but will be extremely loud as a plane takes off. In order to deal with these variations, several noise indices have been developed, which measure how loud each sound is, how long it lasts, and how often the sound occurs. The indices express all the sound occurring during the day as a single average level, which if it occurred all day would convey the same sound energy to the site.



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represents the equivalent energy noise exposure for a shorter time period, typically one hour.

Micropascal: The international unit for pressure, similar to pounds per square inch. 20 micropascals is the human hearing threshold. The scale ranges from zero for the average least perceptible sound to about 130 for the average pain level

Noise Contours: Lines drawn around a noise source indicating equal levels of noise exposure. CNEL and Ldn are the metrics used in this document to describe annoyance due to noise and to establish land use planning criteria for noise.