



Noise from small scale building works



Telephone Number: 01372 732000
contactus@epsom-ewell.gov.uk

Building works are often noisy. However, with care, jobs such as small-scale construction, conversion, refurbishment, decoration, underpinning and even demolition can be carried out without causing too much nuisance to neighbours. This leaflet explains how to avoid causing unacceptable noise during building works

Noisy building activities

We have to accept that building work is often noisy and many jobs cannot get done without some crashing and banging. However, this does not give a building firm permission to annoy neighbours at all hours of the day and night. There are two things building contractors should do to minimise disturbance from small-scale building works. First, they should use the 'best practicable means' to reduce noise. Second, they should keep noisy activities to reasonable hours.

We would define 'noisy activities' as:-

- **Hand tool** - Use of hammers, saws, etc should be restricted to the hours stated in this leaflet.
- **Power tools** – Normal hand-held power tools (drills, saws, sanders, etc) can cause a lot of noise and their use should be restricted to the recommended hours.
- **Plant** – This involves use of tools and plant such as pneumatic hammers, pneumatic vibrators, cement mixers, large power saws and planers, compressors, generators, etc. Use of this more powerful type of equipment needs greater consideration as it can be very noisy.
- **Erection or dismantling scaffolding** – can be a very noisy activity and should only be done within suggested hours.
- **Delivery of plant, equipment or materials** – This can be noisy, especially if it involves use of hoists from lorries or tipper lorries. Early morning deliveries cause particular complaint.
- **The party wall** – Some work on the party wall between dwellings can give surprising levels of noise. Work such as wallpaper stripping or wall preparation can sound very loud next door.

Minimising the noise

Professional building firms are businesses. They therefore have extra responsibilities imposed on them by the law. The main one is to take the 'best practicable means' to stop the noise. For example, using a 'worn out' piece of noisy old equipment is not using the best practicable means. You should use the proper equipment which should be well maintained. Where possible, it should have silencers fitted or should have noise- containing hoods etc.

What can Environmental Health do?

The Control of Pollution Act, 1974 gives special powers to control noise on construction sites; much normal building or demolition work will be covered by these powers. The hours of work can be restricted and conditions placed on what machinery can be used, how it should be used and where it should be located etc.

Reasonable times for building works

The biggest step any building firm can take to avoid causing a noise problem is to be reasonable about their hours of work. We suggest that people need rest from noise at the weekend and in the evening. It is especially important if young children are involved; we seek to provide peace and quiet in the evenings.

Our suggested hours of noisy working are:-

Monday to Friday 08.00 to 18.00

Saturday 08.00 to 13.00

Sunday or Bank Holidays No noisy working at all

It must be emphasised that action can be taken on work within our recommended hours if the firm involved shows no consideration for neighbours. Too much noise during the daytime can still be an offence in law.

Of course, the hours shown are suggestions for restricting only the noisier building activities. There is nothing stopping a building firm from carrying on with the quieter types of work (painting, decorating, etc) outside these hours, as long as they do not make noise nuisance which adversely affects their neighbours.

Information to your neighbours

It would be helpful if you could give your neighbours an indication of what work is being done and how long the works will last. They will then have a better idea of how much noise they have to put up with. Often, it is the uncertainty about the noise which worries people the most and they will be much happier if they know what is going on and have an end in sight.