

Greenville, SC Noise Ordinance

DIVISION 3. - NOISE

Sec. 16-91. - Definitions.

The following words, terms and phrases, when used in this division, shall have the meanings ascribed to them in this section, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning. Except as otherwise provided, all words in this division shall be given their ordinary and customary meaning.

Ambient noise means the generally prevailing sound or combination of sounds at the location where a listener receives the sound of the noise about which a complaint is being made. It is the sound or combination of sounds which a person of ordinary sensibilities would reasonably expect to encounter at the location in the ordinary and customary use of the premises.

Central business district (CBD) means the downtown area, more particularly identified as zoning district C-4, as may from time to time be amended or adjusted under the city's zoning ordinances.

(Code 1985, § 7-2-12; Code 1997, § 16-91; Ord. No. 96-26, § 2(7-2-12(k)), 4-22-1996; Ord. No. 2004-11, 2-9-2004)

Sec. 16-92. - Prohibited noise generally.

Any noise of such character, intensity or duration which substantially interferes with the comfortable enjoyment of persons of ordinary sensibilities occupying, owning or controlling nearby properties, or persons making use of public properties for their intended purposes, is hereby declared to be unlawful and to be a nuisance, and is prohibited.

(Code 1985, § 7-2-12; Code 1997, § 16-92; Ord. No. 96-26, § 2(7-2-12(a)), 4-22-1996; Ord. No. 2004-11, 2-9-2004)

Sec. 16-93. - Standard of reasonableness and use of technology.

It is the intent of the city council in regulating noise to take into account the latest scientific advances in noise measurement and control while at the same time preserving the common sense and common law determination of what constitutes a disturbance or public nuisance. Therefore, technological sound level measurements, while desirable, shall not be required to demonstrate a violation of this division or any other ordinance or statute which establishes the creation of disturbance or public nuisance. Decibel level measurements less than those specified in this division may still establish a violation of this division when due regard is made for the time, place and circumstances of the noise.

(Code 1985, § 7-2-12; Code 1997, § 16-93; Ord. No. 96-26, § 2(7-2-12(b)), 4-22-1996; Ord. No. 2004-11, 2-9-2004)

Sec. 16-94. - Specific noises prohibited.

- (a) *Operation of certain instruments, devices and equipment.* Nuisance noises shall include, but not be limited to, the use or operation of the following instruments, devices or pieces of equipment when operated in the manner prohibited by section 16-92:
- (1) Musical instruments.
 - (2) Radios, receivers, stereos, televisions, disc players, tape players and comparable mechanical and electronic devices which produce sound.
 - (3) Loudspeakers, amplifiers or other devices which enhance or influence the level of sound in any way.
 - (4) Mechanical devices operating by compressed air, such as pneumatic drills and jackhammers.
 - (5) Horns, sirens and signal devices using loud, brash or harassing noises, whether on vehicles or otherwise.
 - (6) Motorized vehicles in operation, regardless of location, without mufflers or with ineffective mufflers or when there is rapid throttle advancing ("revving").
 - (7) The human voice when used to yell, shout, scream or the like.
 - (8) When operated at night, construction machinery, heavy duty equipment used in street repair and maintenance, and domestic and commercial power tools, unless a permit is obtained.
- (b) *Continuous or repeated noises.* Regardless of the level of sound, the following shall be deemed a nuisance and shall be prohibited under section 16-92:
- (1) To keep any animal, including a bird, causing a frequent or long continued noise, such as barking, howling or screeching, disturbing the comfort and repose of any person of ordinary sensibilities in the immediate vicinity.
 - (2) To install or operate a burglar alarm system which uses an audible warning or bell without a functioning device that will shut off the warning or bell within 20 minutes after application of the system when the alarm cannot be readily or conveniently silenced manually by persons who are disturbed by its activation. Each activation of such an alarm that continues beyond 20 minutes shall be deemed a separate offense.

(Code 1985, § 7-2-12; Code 1997, § 16-94; Ord. No. 96-26, § 2(7-2-12(c), (d)), 4-22-1996; Ord. No. 2004-11, 2-9-2004)

Sec. 16-95. - Exemptions.

The following noises shall be exempt from the prohibitions of section 16-92, even when they cause a disturbance:

- (1) Other code provisions notwithstanding, the sound produced by construction machinery, heavy duty equipment, and machines and equipment used for construction, repair, cleaning and maintenance of buildings, streets, or public or private premises

when operated between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. Such devices shall nevertheless be subject to the administrative stop order provisions of section 16-98.

- (2) The sound produced by horns, sirens and alarms used with authorized emergency vehicles or otherwise used as safety devices to alert persons to danger or attempted crime; however, this exemption shall not apply to improperly operating burglar alarms as identified in section 16-94(b)(2).
- (3) The sound produced by emergency repair measures necessary to restore public utilities, or to restore property to a safe condition, or to protect persons or property from imminent danger, following a fire, accident or natural disaster.
- (4) The sound produced by bells or chimes or other carillon instruments when used to signify the passage of hour, half-hour or quarter-hour components, or to commemorate a wedding, funeral or similar event, including regular religious services, provided the sounds do not exceed five continuous minutes in duration in any one-hour period.
- (5) The sound produced by the following, provided there is compliance with any federal regulations applicable to the noise:
 - a. Aircraft in flight or in operation at an airport;
 - b. Railroad equipment in operation on railroad rights-of-way; or
 - c. Motor vehicles, otherwise in lawful operation, on all public streets and highways.
- (6) The sound of water splashing produced by any waterfall, stream, decorative water fountain or irrigation device when established or operated in an ordinary and customary manner.
- (7) The unamplified sound emanating from a ballpark, playing field, stadium or comparable outdoor facility designed and intended for recreational or sports activity when used for organized exhibitions or participatory sports or recreational activities.

(Code 1985, § 7-2-12; Code 1997, § 16-95; Ord. No. 96-26, § 2(7-2-12(e)), 4-22-1996; Ord. No. 2004-11, 2-9-2004; Ord. No. 2014-80, 9-8-2014)

Sec. 16-96. - Enforcement factors.

In the enforcement of this division, an enforcement officer may be required to exercise judgment in determining if a particular noise is sufficiently loud or otherwise so offensive that it would substantially interfere with persons occupying nearby public or private property. When making such determinations, the enforcement officer may consider the following and other relevant factors:

- (1) The volume of the noise.
- (2) The intensity of the noise.
- (3) Whether the nature of the noise is usual or unusual.
- (4) Whether the origin of the noise is natural or unnatural.
- (5) The type and intensity of ambient noise, if any.
- (6) The nature and zoning of the area in which the noise is heard.

(Code 1985, § 7-2-12; Code 1997, § 16-96; Ord. No. 96-26, § 2(7-2-12(f)), 4-22-1996; Ord. No. 2004-11, 2-9-2004)

Sec. 16-97. - Special permits.

- (a) *Entertainment or recreational events.* Whenever the city manager or his designee issues, on a temporary basis, special permits for events of an entertainment or recreational nature, which are held in the central business district, parks, public buildings or elsewhere, then those events shall be exempt from the prohibitions of this division, provided noise is otherwise regulated in the supervision of the activity and provided that the permit shall be subject to revocation at the discretion of the city manager or his designee on the basis of excessive or inappropriate noise. Whenever such revocation occurs, the activities of the event shall then become subject to the prohibitions of this division.
- (b) *Construction or maintenance operations.* The city manager or his designee may issue a permit exempting specific construction, solid waste pickup arrangements and maintenance of public streets and rights-of-way from the prohibitions of this division otherwise applicable to nighttime activity, provided the person seeking such permit can make a showing that no reasonable alternatives exist to creating the noise at night and the activity involved is compatible with the public interest.

(Code 1985, § 7-2-12; Code 1997, § 16-97; Ord. No. 96-26, § 2(7-2-12(g)(1)), 4-22-1996; Ord. No. 2004-11, 2-9-2004)

Sec. 16-98. - Administrative stop orders.

The city manager or his designee may issue administrative stop orders to prohibit temporarily or to reschedule activities otherwise exempt under section 16-95 from the prohibitions of this division, when the continuation of the activity imposes a great hardship or substantial and aggravating inconvenience upon persons reasonably occupying or utilizing nearby premises, provided such administrative stop order is not used to prohibit completely an otherwise lawful activity and the city manager or his designee gives due consideration to balancing the hardships involved.

(Code 1985, § 7-2-12; Code 1997, § 16-98; Ord. No. 96-26, § 2(7-2-12(g)(2)), 4-22-1996; Ord. No. 2004-11, 2-9-2004)

Sec. 16-99. - Special provisions for central business district.

Recognizing that the central business district is a place of mixed uses and close proximity, the intent of this division is that recognition be made of the fact that people occupying premises in the central business district must reasonably expect a greater likelihood of audible sounds from nearby locations than people residing in other districts. However, no person providing or permitting musical performances or other entertainment activities in the central business district should do so in a manner which causes undue hardship or disturbance of persons making lawful use of nearby premises, and the standards set forth in this division are a reasonable measure for determining undue hardship or disturbance in the central business district.

(Code 1985, § 7-2-12; Code 1997, § 16-99; Ord. No. 96-26, § 2(7-2-12(h)), 4-22-1996; Ord. No. 2004-11, 2-9-2004)

Sec. 16-100. - Measurement of noise level; establishment of prima facie violation.

- (a) A prima facie violation of section 16-92 shall be established whenever a measurement of the offending noise shall be taken in accordance with this division and shown to produce a level of noise in excess of the guidelines of the chart contained in this section. The inference established by the chart shall be subject to rebuttal based on the time, place and circumstances of the occurrence.
- (b) Noise levels identified in the chart of guidelines shall be measured in decibels and A-weighted, with the unit of measurement being designated as dB(A). For the purpose of determining dB(A)s, the noise shall be measured on the A-weighting scale and the slow meter response on a sound level meter of standard design and quality having characteristics established by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).
- (c) Measurements recorded shall be taken so as to provide a reasonable representation of the sound being measured with due regard to the location on the premises where the noise is heard by any person making a complaint. Precise positioning of the meter is not required.
- (d) Guideline measurements establishing a prima facie violation are as follows:

Noise Limit	General, City-Wide	Central Business District
Day-time definition	7:00 a.m.— 10:00 p.m.	7:00 a.m.— 10:00 p.m.
Day-time noise limit	60	80
Night-time noise limit	55	75

NOTES:

(1) dB(A) readings on streets, sidewalks and public property in the central business district will be made at least 25 feet away from the privately owned premises from which the noise is generated, or 25 feet from the source if generated on public property.

(2) dB(A) readings in parks and recreational areas outside the central business district will be made at least 100 feet away from the location from which the noise is generated.

(Code 1985, § 7-2-12; Code 1997, § 16-100; Ord. No. 96-26, § 2(7-2-12(i)), 4-22-1996; Ord. No. 2004-11, 2-9-2004)

Sec. 16-101. - Enforcement procedures; penalty; additional remedies.

- (a) With respect to suspected ordinance violations resulting from vehicle noise, law enforcement officers shall have the authority to charge persons under the provisions of this division without having received a complaint from a member of the public.
- (b) All law enforcement officers in the ordinary course of their duties shall have the authority to request compliance without having received a complaint from a member of the public. However, no charge shall be made against any person, unless a complaint is made to an officer and the person has first been provided an opportunity to abate the offending noise immediately without penalty. However, if the violation continues or reoccurs within a 24-hour period, or if the same person has been provided an opportunity two or more times within the preceding 30 days to abate a noise at the same location and the person continues to make the noise or continues to allow it to be made, then such person shall be guilty of a violation of this division and shall be subject to a fine of not less than \$50.00 and not more than the maximum fine allowed by state law for violations of municipal ordinances, or imprisonment for not more than 30 days. The city attorney may also seek injunctive relief, or any other appropriate remedy available at law or in equity, in a court of competent jurisdiction, to ensure compliance.

(Code 1985, § 7-2-12; Code 1997, § 16-101; Ord. No. 96-26, § 2(7-2-12(j)), 4-22-1996; Ord. No. 2004-11, 2-9-2004)

Secs. 16-102—16-130. - Reserved.