



Noise Ordinances of Connecticut

An Initial Report on the CT Noise Ordinance Inventory - 2026

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Contents

Background.....	2
Connecticut’s Noise Control Statute.....	3
Municipal Noise Ordinances.....	4
Next Steps.....	7
Conclusion.....	7
Appendices.....	8
A1 – CT Noise Ordinance Timeline.....	8
A2 – Methodology	10
A3 – Noise Ordinance Review Rubric	11
A4 – Definitions.....	12
A5 – References.....	13

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Noise Ordinances of CT

This report provides background, methodology, and initial observations on the Connecticut Municipal Noise Ordinance Inventory (hereinafter, the “Inventory”), developed by the 2025 Sustainable CT Fellows Cohort in collaboration with the Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG) and Sustainable CT. The Inventory evaluates active municipal noise ordinances (as of August 2025) for all 169 municipalities in Connecticut against the state noise control plan adopted pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) §22a-69. The Inventory establishes a baseline for future planning and identifies initial considerations for municipalities evaluating potential updates to their noise ordinances.

This report is intended as a preliminary assessment of noise control in Connecticut and does not provide an exhaustive evaluation of noise regulations, policy development, enforcement practices, or historical evolution. Future publications are anticipated to address best practices, standard operating procedures, and zoning-based approaches to noise management.

Background

The following section summarizes the context, rationale, and historical development of noise control regulations relevant to the Inventory.

The Need for Noise Regulations

Noise pollution, defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as “unwanted or disturbing sound,” includes sound that interferes with normal activities (e.g., sleep or conversation) or diminishes quality of life. Although noise impacts may be less immediately visible than those associated with air or water pollution, substantial and well-documented evidence demonstrates significant effects on both human health and ecological systems. Noise regulations provide standards and enforcement mechanisms to manage noise sources and mitigate these impacts.

Documented health impacts associated with noise exposure include sleep disturbance, cognitive impairment, hearing loss, endocrine disruption, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseaseⁱ. The World Health Organization has reported that environmental noise contributes to a disease burden second only to that attributable to air pollutionⁱⁱ. According to a policy brief by the American Public Health Association, approximately 145 million Americans are at risk of noise-related hypertension, which is associated with heart disease, stroke, and increased mortalityⁱⁱⁱ.

Environmental impacts of noise pollution arise through physiological stress and disruption of acoustic signals essential for wildlife communication, mating, hunting, and predator avoidance. These effects, while not directly observable, are associated with ecological degradation, including reduced population viability, biodiversity loss, and diminished ecosystem resilience^{iv}.

Noise Pollution Policy History

Federal involvement in noise control emerged in the early 1970s with the establishment of national noise policy and funding for state and local programs. Connecticut responded by enacting its Noise Pollution Control Law in 1974, followed by adoption of statewide regulations in 1978.

Over time, this regulatory framework weakened. Federal funding for noise control activities ended in 1982. In 1991, Connecticut amended its statutes to make DEEP's statewide enforcement authority discretionary rather than mandatory, contributing to a gradual decline in state-level oversight. In 2022, the state formally eliminated DEEP's review and approval of municipal noise ordinances.

As a result, municipalities remain encouraged—but not required—to adopt local noise ordinances. Municipalities that adopt such ordinances must meet or exceed the requirements of the state noise control regulations. The Inventory provides the first statewide overview of municipal noise ordinances operating under this current statutory and regulatory context.

A detailed timeline of noise control policy development is provided in Appendix A1.

Connecticut's Noise Control Statute

This section summarizes Connecticut's statewide noise control statute, CGS §22a-69, and the associated regulations codified in the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies (RCSA) §22a-69.^v

Key Components

State law requires that any “municipal noise control ordinance shall be at least as stringent as any state noise control plan” (CGS §22a-73(c)). Accordingly, the provisions of RCSA §22a-69 were used as the minimum standard against which municipal ordinances were evaluated. The state regulations were disaggregated into ninety-nine (99) discrete components addressing definitions, noise limits, exemptions and exclusions, measurement procedures, and enforcement requirements. These components are summarized below.

Definitions. General legal terms, technical acoustics terminology, and land-use classifications.

Exemptions and Exclusions. Circumstances under which regulations do not apply or apply in modified form, including natural phenomena, construction activities, and operation of certain equipment.

Allowable Noise Levels. Maximum permissible sound levels for noise emitted and received across land-use categories (residential, commercial, industrial), including provisions addressing impulse noise, prominent discrete tones, infrasonic noise, and ultrasonic noise.

Measurement Procedures. Specifications governing measurement locations, equipment standards, and protocols for sound measurement.

Enforcement Procedures. Provisions establishing prohibited conduct and identifying the entity responsible for investigating compliance with the regulations.

Observations on the State’s Noise Regulations

State enforcement is discretionary. DEEP retains authority to enforce statewide noise regulations but is not statutorily required to do so.

State enforcement is minimal. There is currently no dedicated enforcement entity or funding stream for noise regulation at the state level. The Office of Noise Control referenced in RCSA §22a-69-7.4 does not currently exist in practice.^{vi}

State regulations are dated. The existing regulations were adopted in 1978. Since that time, new noise sources and concerns have emerged, including large-scale data centers and industrial low-frequency noise. In addition, broad exemptions—such as those for construction—may be less appropriate in a context where development increasingly occurs through redevelopment in densely settled areas. Updated state regulations could provide municipalities with clearer guidance and enhanced capacity to protect public health and environmental quality.

Municipal Noise Ordinances

This section presents summary statistics and observations regarding municipal noise ordinances across Connecticut.

Baseline Statistics

Seventy-eight of Connecticut’s 169 municipalities (approximately 46 percent) have formally adopted a noise ordinance. For purposes of this Inventory, municipalities were categorized based on the degree to which their ordinances meet or exceed the standards established in the state noise regulations.

Exceeds Compliance. Ordinances meeting full compliance and providing additional protections beyond state requirements. No municipalities met this standard.

Full Compliance. Ordinances incorporating all substantive components of the state noise regulations. One municipality met this standard.

Partial Compliance. Ordinances addressing key regulatory elements—such as definitions, noise limits, exemptions, enforcement, and measurement procedures—but providing less comprehensive coverage than the state regulations. Fifty-nine municipalities fell into this category.

Marginal Compliance. Ordinances failing to meet the criteria for partial compliance. Eighteen municipalities were classified as marginally compliant.

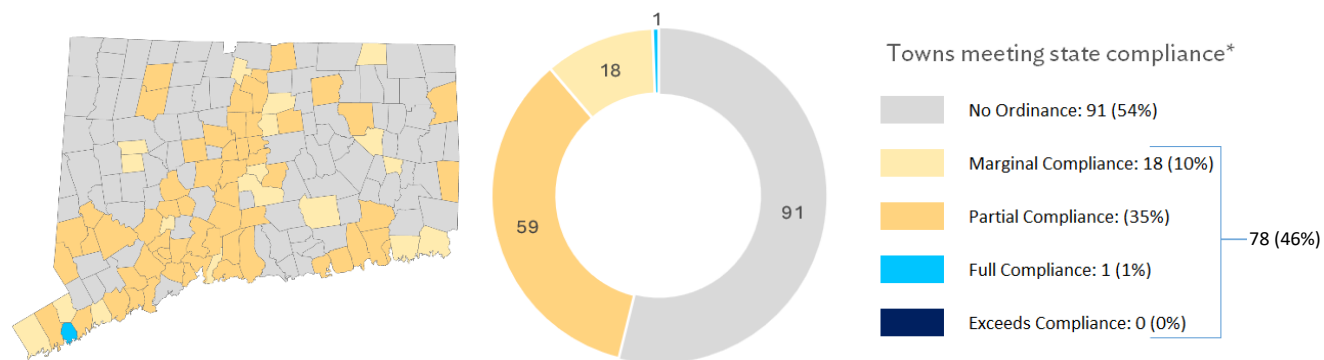


Figure 1. Count and geographic distribution of municipal noise ordinances. Compliance classifications reflect this study's interpretation of CGS §22a-69 and do not indicate whether an ordinance has been approved by DEEP.

Noise Exemptions, Exclusions, and Limits

Municipal ordinances frequently include provisions addressing specific noise sources through limits, exemptions, exclusions, or descriptive language. These provisions were cataloged across all adopted municipal ordinances.

Definitions

- **Limits.** Maximum allowable sound levels, often differentiated by land use, time of day, and day of week.
- **Exclusions.** Noise sources entirely excluded from regulation.
- **Exemptions.** Noise sources subject to conditional regulation, such as time-restricted operation.
- **Other.** References to specific noise sources without clearly defined limits, exemptions, or exclusions.
- **Undefined.** Noise sources not addressed in the ordinance.

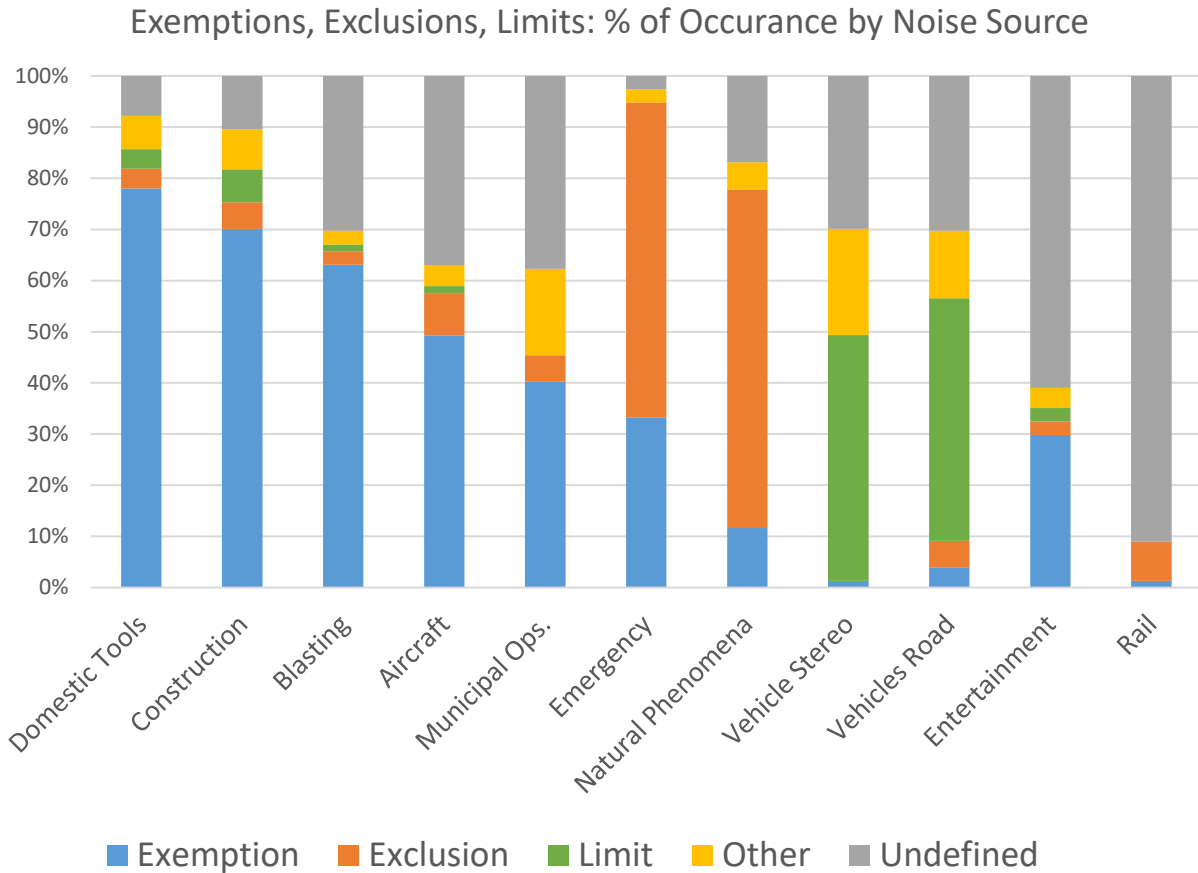


Figure 2 The percentage of exemptions, exclusions, limits, other, and undefined provisions by type of noise emitter.

Observations on the Municipal Ordinances

Municipal adoption of noise ordinances is voluntary. CGS §22a-73 encourages municipal participation but does not mandate adoption.

Municipal ordinances must meet or exceed state standards. State law requires that adopted municipal ordinances be at least as stringent as state regulations.

Some municipalities without ordinances defer informally to state regulations. During outreach to town clerks, several municipalities indicated that they rely on state noise regulations in practice despite lacking formal authority to enforce them locally.

State review of municipal ordinances has ceased. Since 2022, municipal noise ordinances are no longer subject to DEEP review or approval.

Landscaping equipment is a recurring policy focus. Public concern regarding leaf blowers (particularly gas-powered equipment) has led some municipalities to incorporate restrictions within noise ordinances or adopt standalone regulations. Approaches vary and continue to evolve.

Regulatory coverage is uneven statewide. Most municipalities lack a local noise ordinance, and those that have adopted ordinances vary substantially in scope, technical detail, and enforcement mechanisms. Historic DEEP review did not require full conformity with state regulations, resulting in significant variation. In the absence of active state enforcement, residents in municipalities without local ordinances often lack a clear enforcement pathway.

Next Steps

The Inventory and Initial Report are intended as a foundation for subsequent evaluation and policy development. Potential areas for further work include municipal education, model ordinance development, technical assistance through Councils of Governments, and research into enforcement practices and zoning-based noise controls.

For municipalities seeking near-term guidance, adoption of the state noise control regulations—while dated—offers a comprehensive and legally established framework that provides substantial protection against noise impacts.

Conclusion

The 2025 Sustainable CT/WestCOG Noise Ordinance Inventory constitutes the first comprehensive statewide survey of municipal noise ordinances in Connecticut. It establishes a baseline for understanding how noise is regulated locally and identifies areas of inconsistency and regulatory gaps. While municipal approaches vary widely, the findings underscore the presence of an existing state framework and accumulated technical expertise that can inform future efforts. This report is intended as a starting point for informed and coordinated evaluation rather than a final assessment.

Appendices

A1 - CT Noise Ordinance Timeline

Prior to 1972 noise pollution was largely unregulated at the federal and state levels. At the time, rising urbanization and industrial activity brought forth increased noise levels which began to be recognized as a growing public concern due to its negative impacts on human health and the environment.

The Noise Control Act of 1972.^{vii} In response to growing concerns about the adverse effects of noise on health and the environment, the federal government passed the Noise Control Act of 1972. This landmark piece of legislation established a national policy to reduce noise pollution, focusing on improving public health and welfare by setting noise standards for various industries, equipment, and transportation sectors. It provided funding to state and local governments to support noise abatement programs, laying the groundwork for noise control efforts across the nation. The act also established the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as the primary federal agency responsible for coordinating these efforts.

Connecticut State Noise Pollution Control Laws, 1974. Building on the federal noise control efforts, Connecticut enacted its own Noise Pollution Control Law in 1974. These state-level regulations were intended to provide a minimum standard of protection against noise pollution, ensuring that all communities in Connecticut had some baseline level of noise control. The state laws granted municipalities the authority to create their own local noise ordinances, allowing them to implement stricter regulations if desired. This sets the stage for the decentralized approach to noise regulation, where local governments had the flexibility to tailor regulations to address their specific noise-related concerns.

The Quiet Communities Act of 1978.^{viii} The Quiet Communities Act of 1978 furthered the federal government's commitment to reducing noise pollution by providing funding and resources for local noise abatement initiatives. This act recognized the need for noise control in residential, recreational, and other community environments, in addition to the industrial sector. The act also aimed to help communities develop programs to monitor and control noise pollution, fostering more widespread awareness of noise as a public health issue.

Connecticut State Noise Regulations, 1978. State Noise Regulations were developed in line with the *Noise Control Act of 1972* and the *Quiet Communities Act of 1978*. These regulations were designed and administered by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP, now known as DEEP). The state regulations established a minimum standard of noise control, which all adopted municipal noise ordinances were required to meet. Municipalities were also given the flexibility to adopt stricter noise regulations tailored to their unique needs. These regulations covered various noise sources, including transportation, construction, and industrial activities, and served as a foundation for local noise ordinances.

Congress Defunds Federal Noise Pollution Control Activities, 1982. The loss of federal funds left states with the responsibility to regulate noise pollution. This shift meant that while noise was still recognized as a problem, federal oversight and funding for noise abatement programs were significantly reduced.

DEP's Powers to Regulate Noise become discretionary, 1991.^{ix} Connecticut General Assembly passed PA 91-10 which updated CGS §22a-73 such that DEP (the predecessor to DEEP) “*may* (previously *shall*) develop, adopt, maintain and enforce a comprehensive state-wide program of noise regulation.” While DEP still had the authority to implement and enforce noise control measures, it was no longer required to do so. As a result, DEP largely stepped back from active enforcement of noise control regulations.

DEEP no longer reviews Municipal Noise Ordinances, 2022. Connecticut’s General Assembly passed legislation, PA 22-143, which removed DEEP’s role in reviewing and approving municipal noise ordinances. In turn municipalities develop noise control policy and regulations without the guidance and support previously provided by DEEP. Prior to this change, DEEP had been responsible for approving local noise ordinances, provided they were in conformity the state noise control plan.

Noise Ordinance Inventory, 2025. Following the study of the potential for implementation of a “quiet zone” on the New Canaan Branch Line of Metro-North, and numerous public commentaries regarding noise pollution, WestCOG partnered with Sustainable CT and its 2025 Fellows Cohort to develop a Noise Ordinance Inventory to capture the existing status and content of municipal noise ordinances across CT. The content now captured in a database format allows for a statewide evaluation of noise ordinances. For further context on the development of the noise ordinance inventory, see the methodology section in the appendix.

A2 – Methodology

To assess the state of municipal noise ordinances in Connecticut, Sustainable CT Fellows and the 2025 Fellow Cohort partnered with the Western Connecticut Council of Governments (WestCOG) to conduct a comprehensive inventory of local noise ordinances across all 169 municipalities in the state (referred to hereinafter as the Inventory). The goal of the project was to evaluate the presence, content, and relative strength of municipal noise ordinances and to identify gaps in their regulations across the state. This inventory serves as a foundational resource for future planning, model ordinance development, and statewide noise policy discussions.

Inventory Process: The inventory process began with the identification and collection of noise ordinances available through municipal websites and local code databases. Ordinances not located through those channels were confirmed by contacting the respective Town Clerk. Municipalities were categorized into three groups: (1) those with their own local noise ordinance, (2) those that referenced the Connecticut state noise regulations but did not have a standalone ordinance, and (3) those with no apparent noise regulation.

Noise Ordinance Rubric: Each local ordinance was reviewed and evaluated using a standardized rubric developed by WestCOG staff in consultation with a trained acoustician, Amy Ziffer. The rubric, which drew on the state’s noise control regulations, assessed various ordinance components, such as quality of definitions, ambient noise standards, time-of-day sound limits, enforcement authority, and the presence or absence of language addressing specific noise types (e.g., impulse or low-frequency noise).

Ordinance Review Process: This review process reflects a layman’s attempt to discern CT’s Noise Ordinances, which would parallel the same environment that most municipalities would find themselves when interpreting and performing enforcement of their ordinances. During the review process, ordinances that did not align with rubric categories or presented ambiguous language were flagged for further analysis. During the review process, the fellows met biweekly with WestCOG and the volunteer acoustician to ensure data consistency. The rubric was modified during these meetings where inconsistencies and gaps were identified. Additionally, fellows met with attorneys Rich Roberts and Trent Kaisen from the firm Halloran and Sage to discuss and confirm legal questions related to noise ordinances.

Key caveats:

- Only noise ordinances (not zoning regulations) were considered for the Inventory¹.
- Some ordinance provisions did not align with the rubric, limiting comparability.
- The study evaluates ordinances on paper, not enforcement, or frequency of noise complaints.
- Findings reflect current ordinances, not best practices.

¹ Some municipalities include noise regulatory language as part of their zoning such as in the municipalities of Colchester, Somers, East Granby. These were not included as part of the ordinance inventory.

A3 – Noise Ordinance Review Rubric

A rubric with 116 entries was developed for the assessment of municipal noise ordinances. Below is a list of fields. A complete rubric with descriptions, data entry format, and coding instructions is available on the project webpage. <https://WestCOG.org/noisepollution>

1. MUNICIPALITY	41. METRIC_WEIGHTING_SPECIFIED	81. CONSTRUCTION_WEEK_END
2. TOWN_ID	42. TIME_CONSTANT_SPECIFIED	82. CONSTRUCTION_WEEKEND_START
3. NOISE_ORDINANCE	43. METER_STANDARD_SPECIFIED	83. CONSTRUCTION_WEEKEND_END
4. STATE_COMPLIANCE	44. RES_RES_LIMIT_DAY	84. CONSTRUCTION_HOLIDAY_START
5. COMMENT	45. RES_RES_LIMIT_NIGHT	85. CONSTRUCTION_HOLIDAY_END
6. WHY_SCORE	46. RES_COM_LIMIT_DAY	86. DOMESTIC_TOOLS_WEEK_START
7. POLICY_URL	47. RES_COM_LIMIT_NIGHT	87. DOMESTIC_TOOLS_WEEK_END
8. ADOPTION_DATE	48. RES_IND_LIMIT_DAY	88. DOMESTIC_TOOLS_WEEKEND_START
9. LAST_UPDATED_DATE	49. RES_IND_LIMIT_NIGHT	89. DOMESTIC_TOOLS_WEEKEND_END
10. DEFINITIONS_CRITERIA	50. COM_RES_LIMIT_DAY	90. DOMESTIC_TOOLS_HOLIDAY_START
11. LIMITS_CRITERIA	51. COM_RES_LIMIT_NIGHT	91. DOMESTIC_TOOLS_HOLIDAY_END
12. EXEMPTIONS_CRITERIA	52. COM_COM_LIMIT_DAY	92. ENTERTAINMENT
13. ENFORCEMENT_CRITERIA	53. COM_COM_LIMIT_NIGHT	93. VEHICLE_STEREO
14. MEASUREMENT_CRITERIA	54. COM_IND_LIMIT_DAY	94. VEHICLES_ROAD
15. DEFINITIONS_PRESENT	55. COM_IND_LIMIT_NIGHT	95. AIRCRAFT
16. DEFINITIONS_COMPREHENSIVE_SCORE	56. IND_RES_LIMIT_DAY	96. RAIL
17. AMBIENT_DEFINED	57. IND_RES_LIMIT_NIGHT	97. EMERGENCY
18. AMBIENT_DEF_QUALITY	58. IND_COM_LIMIT_DAY	98. DOMESTIC_TOOLS
19. DAY_PERIOD_DEFINED	59. IND_COM_LIMIT_NIGHT	99. CONSTRUCTION
20. WEEK_DAY_START	60. IND_IND_LIMIT_DAY	100. MUNICIPAL_OPERATIONS
21. WEEK_DAY_END	61. IND_IND_LIMIT_NIGHT	101. NATURAL_PHENOMENA
22. SATURDAY_DAY_START	62. OTHER_ZONES_DEFINED	102. BLASTING
23. SATURDAY_DAY_END	63. IMPULSE_LIMIT_ANY_DB	103. OTHER_NOTABLE_ACTIVITIES
24. SUNDAY_DAY_START	64. IMPULSE_LIMIT_NIGHT_DB	104. ENFORCEMENT_AUTHORITY
25. SUNDAY_DAY_END	65. TONAL_PENALTY_PRESENT	105. PENALTY_TYPE_CODE
26. HOLIDAY_DAY_START	66. TONAL_PENALTY_DB	106. INITIAL_FINE
27. HOLIDAY_DAY_END	67. HIGH_AMBIENT_CLAUSE_PRESENT	107. VARIANCE_PROCESS_DEFINED
28. NIGHT_PERIOD_DEFINED	68. HIGH_AMBIENT_ALLOWANCE_DB	108. EQUIPMENT_SEIZURE_ALLOWED
29. WEEK_NIGHT_START	69. SHORT_TERM_EXCURSION_PRESENT	109. NOISE_MANAGEMENT_PLAN_REQUIRED
30. WEEK_NIGHT_END	70. LFN_MENTION	110. APPEALS_PROCESS_PRESENT
31. SATURDAY_NIGHT_START	71. LFN_LIMIT_TYPE	111. MEASUREMENT_RECORDKEEPING
32. SATURDAY_NIGHT_END	72. LFN_LIMIT_VALUE	112. COMPLAINT_RECORDKEEPING
33. SUNDAY_NIGHT_START	73. INFRASONIC_ULTRASONIC_LIMIT_PRESENT	113. INDOOR_NOISE_LIMIT_PRESENT
34. SUNDAY_NIGHT_END	74. INFRASONIC_ULTRASONIC_LIMIT_DB	114. PLANNING_NOISE_ASSESSMENT_REQUIRED
35. HOLIDAY_NIGHT_START	75. MEASUREMENT_POINT_SPECIFIED	115. DEEP_APPROVED
36. HOLIDAY_NIGHT_END	76. MEASUREMENT_POINT_CODE	116. LAST_DEEP_REVIEW
37. EVENING_PERIOD_DEFINED	77. ROW_IGNORED	
38. AMBIENT_NOISE_METRIC_TYPE	78. GENERAL_SUBJECTIVE_STANDARD	
39. IMPULSE_NOISE_METRIC_TYPE	79. SUBJECTIVE_TERMS	
40. OTHER_NOISE_METRIC_TYPE	80. CONSTRUCTION_WEEK_START	

A4 - Definitions

To provide clarity, the following definitions distinguish legal terms that are often used interchangeably in casual conversation. This report uses these terms deliberately and consistently. For general and technical acoustic definitions used in the State's Noise Control Regulations, see [RCSA §22a-69-1](#).

Statute. A law enacted by a state or federal legislature that establishes legal authority, rights, or obligations and may delegate power to agencies or municipalities to adopt regulations or ordinances. *Example: Connecticut General Statute (CGS) § 22a-69 authorizes the state to control noise and permits municipalities to adopt local noise ordinances.*

Ordinance. A law enacted by a municipal legislative body under authority granted by state statute, establishing rules, standards, or prohibitions that are enforceable within the municipality's jurisdiction. *Example: A town noise ordinance adopted pursuant to CGS § 22a-69 establishing time-of-day limits on construction noise.*

Regulations. Binding standards, requirements, or procedures that implement and operationalize a law, including definitions, numeric limits, measurement methods, exemptions, and enforcement rules. Regulations may be adopted by state agencies through formal rulemaking or embedded within municipal ordinances under delegated authority. *Example: RCSA §§ 22a-69-1 through 22a-69-7 establishing statewide noise zone standards and sound measurement protocols. Or a municipal noise ordinance section specifying decibel limits and requiring sound measurements to follow American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards.*

Policy. A formally adopted statement of principles, goals, or guidance that expresses intent or direction but does not, by itself, establish legally enforceable requirements. *Example: A municipal Plan of Conservation and Development policy stating that the town seeks to minimize excessive noise in residential neighborhoods while supporting appropriate economic activity.*

Noise Pollution. Unwanted or disruptive sound that interferes with health, quality of life, or human and natural systems. Common sources include transportation, construction, industrial operations, and commercial or entertainment activities.

Zoning regulations. Municipal regulations adopted under authority delegated by state statute that govern land use, development standards, and permitted activities within designated zoning districts. Some municipalities include noise-related standards or controls within their zoning regulations. While zoning-based noise controls can be an effective planning tool, they are beyond the scope of this Noise Ordinance Inventory. Zoning regulations typically regulate land use and development rather than providing complaint-based, real-time noise enforcement.

American Public Health Association.

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