

Update

Spring 2011

Neighborhood Noise

By Andrew Kidde

Saturday morning, around dawn. After a long, hard week, you're enjoying one of the great pleasures in life... sleeping in. Suddenly, a neighbor fires up his chain saw. Across the back fence someone starts banging nails. Your cherished slumbers are rudely terminated. For a while you vainly cover your head with the pillow, and then, discouraged and cranky, you get up to face the day.

Chronic noise problems often cause irritation and frustration. They can also be hard to resolve. Laws and ordinances protect us from some noise disturbances. But many people are reluctant to call the authorities on their neighbors. And some bothersome noises may be within legal limits — a fact that probably won't make the noise less disturbing.

In this article, we'll list the agencies charged with enforcing noise law in Bellevue and review the local laws they enforce. We'll also discuss alternatives to calling the authorities that may be more appropriate and effective in addressing neighborhood noise problems.

If you want to call the authorities, it's important to know who to call. Here in Bellevue, it depends on the type of noise involved. If the noise is from a stationary source, such as a generator, heat pump, or compressor, you should call the Code Compliance Department (425-452-4570). If the noise is a barking dog, call King County Animal Control (206-296-7387). For all other noise problems, you should call the Bellevue Police Department (425-452-6917).

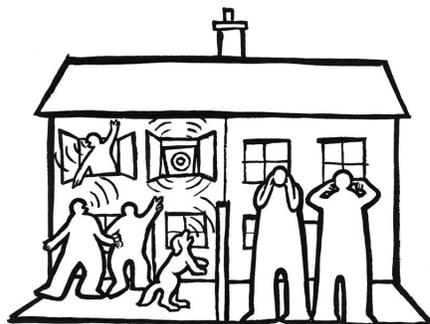
If it is a stationary source noise problem, Code Compliance will come to your property with a noise meter and measure the decibels at

your property line. If the noise level exceeds the legal limit under the City's Noise Control Ordinance, then the Code Compliance Officer can require the owner of the machine to mitigate the noise by moving it or building a sound baffling fence around it. According to Bellevue Code Compliance, before taking a hard-line enforcement approach, the officers will often try to get neighbors to work together and negotiate how to solve these noise problems.

If the noise disturbance is from a barking dog, King County Animal Control may be able to intervene. Animal Control requires that pets be licensed and enforces regulations regarding the number of pets allowed on individual properties. Animal Control also has an intervention process for dealing with barking dogs.

Almost all other noise disturbances are handled by the Police Department. The most common type of problem they handle is complaints about loud parties. According to Officer Cherie Baker, they do not typically use sound meters, instead they use the 75 feet rule: if a noise can be clearly heard from 75 feet away, then it is a noise disturbance, and the Police will knock at the door. They have the power to cite violators with fines in some cases.

Most of the noise standards in Bellevue's Noise Control Ordinance have different standards for night time. In most residential areas the permissible level of noise is significantly lower between the hours of 10:00 PM and 7:00 AM — referred to as "quiet time." Construction noise between the hours of 7:00 AM and 6:00 PM is allowed to exceed the standard noise levels under a special



exception in the statute. However, if the construction is for “temporary repair, addition or maintenance projects on existing single-family homes,” then the noise can continue until 8:00 PM.

The City of Bellevue Noise Control Ordinance, Chapter 9.18, has numerous other exceptions and special cases. The entire ordinance, about ten pages, can be viewed on line at www.bellevuewa.gov

Going to the authorities over a noise problem can be tricky. Your neighbors may see your action as hostile. Neighborly relations can deteriorate. Even worse, your neighbors might retaliate, for example by calling Code Compliance over that shed you constructed near the property line. Neighborhood feuds can rapidly snowball in this manner.

Another possible problem with going to the authorities is that the remedy they provide may not help you. For example, if you are a night owl who gets up around 10 AM, the standard “quiet time” provisions may not be the quiet time you need. Or, you may succeed in reducing the number of pets your neighbor can keep, only to learn that the neighbor is getting rid of their quiet cat, while keeping their three barking dogs.

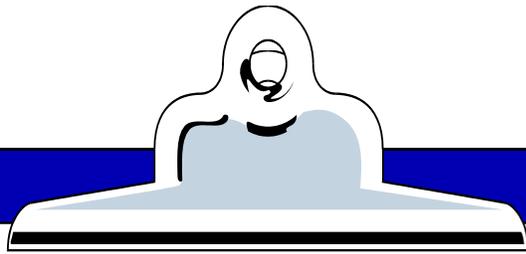
An alternative to going to the authorities is to negotiate directly with your neighbor. We know this may not be easy – and we don’t recommend trying this right after you’ve been woken up on Saturday morning. Nor should you wait through months and months of mounting frustration. However, if you prepare yourself and carefully pick the time to speak with your neighbor there is a good possibility that you can negotiate a solution that addresses your specific situation. Sometimes merely raising awareness can be helpful.

For suggestions on ways to open up productive discussions call for our publication “How to Resolve Conflict.” Also see “Dealing with Noise Issues” and “Finding Solutions to Noise Problems” on the next page. You can call us at 425-452-4091 for more help.

If negotiating directly with your neighbor doesn’t work, or is too daunting a prospect, consider using our free dispute resolution services. We provide highly trained, neutral conciliators and mediators who can help facilitate the discussions between you and your neighbor. Mediation can be particularly helpful when the issues are emotional or complex. Through this process the mediators will help you and your neighbor articulate your concerns in a safe, neutral environment, and then find a solution that works for everyone.

Photos from the 2011 Volunteer Recognition Party





Parent—Teen Update

By
Gwen Jones

As we get closer to the end of the school year, the senior volunteers are getting ready to graduate and move on. We will miss them and we wish them success in the future. This creates an opportunity for the newer teen volunteers to move into the role of mediating actual cases. Everyone is encouraged to observe mediations when there is the opportunity to do so, and to make an effort to attend practice sessions to polish your skills.



Our next in-service training is "Teens and the Juvenile Court System: What Happens When a Teen is Arrested?" One of our volunteers, Don Davidson, will tell us about his experience with the Partnership for Youth Justice where he works with families in the Diversion Program. This information ties in with truancy and the work we do at the School Engagement Workshops for the Bellevue School District. Don will also talk a little about understanding the teenage brain and the decision making process which may help us understand some of the reasons that teens get into trouble. This in-service will be on Wed., April 27th from 6-8 pm in Room 1E-112. Please plan to attend!

BNMP Training Opportunities For Mediators and Conciliators

Parent-Teen In-Service Training:

**Teens and the Juvenile Court System:
What Happens When a Teen is Arrested?**
with Don Davidson
Wed., April 27th, from 6-8 PM in Room 1E-112

Training:

**Conflict Management and Negotiation
Training** (Prerequisite for Basic Mediation
Training)

Cost: \$295.00
Wed., May 4th, 5 PM–9 PM
Fri., May 6th, 9 AM–5 PM
Wed., May 11th, 5 PM–9 PM
Fri., May 13th, 9 AM–5 PM
Room 1E-112

Dispute Resolution Center of King County: CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS

With Betsy BeMiller, certified trainer
April 14th and 16th
Call 206-443-9603 for more information.

18th Annual

NW Dispute Resolution Conference

Fri., April 29th and Sat., April 30th
William H. Gates Hall, UW Campus, Seattle
Early registration deadline: April 15th
www.wsba-adr.org/page/northwest-dispute-resolution
**Please contact the BNMP office for information
about the group discount rate.**

Program Staff:

Program Co-Manager:	Cheryl Cohen	-	452-5222
Program Co-Manager:	Andrew Kidde	-	452-5288
Program Assistant	Gwen Jones	-	452-2897

City of Bellevue website: <http://www.bellevuewa.gov>
(Look for the Mediation Program under "Neighborhood Information")

Volunteer Profile:

Benjamin Trnka



Hello! My name is Benjamin Trnka and I am a senior at the International School in Bellevue and a Teen Mediator in the Bellevue Parent/Teen Mediation Program for Bellevue City Hall. I started with the mediation program in the summer of 2008 and have been involved in training, observing and mediating ever since. I have had the pleasure of co-mediating for five different families, and currently am involved in another case, and it has been a truly rewarding experience. Mediation is truly a beautiful program whose values and procedures carry over into other fields of work as well. Through this program, I feel like I've become more open-minded and effective at conflict resolution as well. In college, I hope to research neuroscience, and hopefully get involved with the United Nations as well – an organization that knows all too well the benefits of mediation in resolving global issues. I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to change the lives of families in Bellevue through this program, and will hopefully be able to use the skills I have gained to aid even more people around the world! I want to thank Cathy, Gwen and all the others that have given us teen mediators this great opportunity to improve the local community. It saddens me that I will be leaving the program after this year, but I wish the future generations of mediators all the best luck and success in their cases – you are all making a monumental difference!

**BELLEVUE
NEIGHBORHOOD MEDIATION PROGRAM**

City of Bellevue Department of Planning and Community Development
P.O. Box 90012 Bellevue, WA 98009-9012