

EUB INTERNAL NOISE MONITORING POLICY

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Introduction: It is not the role of the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (EUB) to replace industry's in-house experts or independent acoustical consultants in performing the technical analysis of environmental noise complaints, but rather to expedite problem issues, present a fair and unbiased viewpoint in mediating disputes, and in the administration of the Noise Control Directive ID 94-4 (NCD).¹ The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance in determining when a comprehensive or ambient sound survey can be conducted by the Alberta Energy & Utilities Board (EUB).

Discussion: The EUB operates the Sound Monitoring System (SMS) which consists of a B&K 2231 sound level meter capable of a wide range of acoustical measurements, a B&K 1625 octave band filter set to conduct frequency analysis, and a Mitsubishi Hi-Fidelity VHS player capable of recording actual background noise over a ten-hour period. Accompanying the SMS is software that allows for the calculations and reporting of survey and frequency analysis results. When used in accordance with the criteria below, this equipment can determine if a particular facility is in compliance with the NCD. Each area office is also equipped with a much simpler sound level meter which can provide an instantaneous Sound Pressure reading in decibels (dBA). This measurement device is used only as an assessment tool to get an idea of the severity of the problem; not for establishing compliance for a facility or as the sole basis for confirming that a complaint is justified warranting remedial action by the operator.

Roles within the EUB: The Noise Monitoring Team, consisting of an acoustical specialist and five Field Surveillance staff, are trained in the use and application of the Sound Measurement System (SMS). Team members are responsible for operating the equipment when noise surveys are warranted in accordance with the strict criteria within the EUB Noise Monitoring Policy². A Team member will conduct the survey and be available to assist in the interpretation and explanation of the NCD. They will also download survey data, analyse the data and generate a report of the survey results.

The acoustical specialist is responsible for the administration and interpretation of the NCD and the EUB Noise Monitoring Policy, and serves as an expert technical resource on acoustical engineering matters to the EUB. He is also required to organize and provide opportunities for training and technical proficiency programs for EUB staff, and advance and promote industry and public understanding of environmental noise control requirements and methodologies.

EUB Noise Monitoring Survey Criteria: The following criteria must be used to assess if it is appropriate and applicable to use the SMS to deal with a complaint or noise control situation. Any exceptions to these criteria must be discussed with the acoustical specialist prior to committing to a monitoring survey: 1) When the results of an existing survey conducted by the operator or a

reputable consultant are in question by the complainant. 2) When there are unreasonable delays (> six weeks from the date of EUB request) for a survey to be conducted by the operator or their consultant. 3) For source identification when a multi-source environment exists and field staff are unable to identify the main contributor. 4) When the EUB determines a need based on site-specific circumstances. The acoustical specialist must be consulted in such situations to confirm the need for a survey, and the availability of the SMS. A prime directive within the EUB Noise Monitoring Policy is to not assume the role or responsibility of industry to investigate and respond accordingly to environmental noise complaints related to any of their operations. Rather it is an additional tool which serves all parties objectively.

Complaint Resolution: The EUB strives to provide effective and consistent response to environmental noise complaints directed at the energy industry. Various steps are pre-defined and followed in the course of complaint resolution with all significant information and events documented and communicated to the affected parties in a timely fashion. The EUB may also make recommendations regarding any survey results; communicate with residents or communities regarding the EUB environmental noise control policy; assist in dispute resolutions; and provide enforcement options, where required. The EUB goal in complaint resolution is to bring the matter to a close or to some satisfactory endpoint within 90 days by setting clear expectations for all parties accompanied by well understood and agreed to consequences for failing to meet these.

Compliance and Enforcement: When compliance to the NCD has been achieved by the operator, it is the responsibility of the EUB to see that this is appropriately communicated and understood by all parties. When there is non-compliance an appropriate course of enforcement must be chosen having regard for the severity of the problem, the willingness of the complainants to accept the terms, and consistency with internal policy. It is important to communicate this to all parties and to set out reasonable expectations to resolve the matter. Some enforcement options may range from total shut down of the offending facility, to allowing continued operation while mitigation and sound attenuation measures are being engineered and installed. The operator or the complainant may appeal a staff ruling detailing their reasons to the acoustical specialist. The EUB may then consider one or more of the following options: 1) further noise assessments, 2) initiating a dispute resolution process, 3) requesting noise attenuation at the facility, 4) appropriate enforcement procedure, 5) to refer the matter to the Board for a Public Hearing into the matter.

References:

1. "Noise Control Directive ID 94-4" Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (August 94)
2. "EUB Internal Noise Monitoring Policy" Alberta Energy and Utilities Board (July 96)

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