



Public Health Nuisances

Considerations for developers, builders and contractors

Environmental Health Guide

What are public health nuisances?

- New developments, renovations and other activities such as erecting staging for temporary events or installing a swimming pool, may cause a public health nuisance.
- Common public health nuisances can include (but are not limited to):
 - **Noise** (trucks, music and radios, people, any construction activity, large scale events, nail guns, jack hammers, compressors)
 - **Vibration** (pool pumps, construction equipment, blasting activities)
 - **Odour** (pesticide spraying, vehicle/engine exhaust, chimney and offensive exhaust emissions, fibreglassing)
 - **Dust and particulates** (land clearing, smoke, burning of material, heating appliances, smoke from incorrect use)
 - **Visual pollution** (unsightly rubbish piles, vehicles including parts)
 - **Light pollution** (excess stage lighting, security lighting)
 - **Waste** (litter, illegal dumping, inadequate waste resources recovery)
 - **Liquid wastes** (wash down water, cement handling, brick acid washing waste, paint brush waste, storm water including sand being washed or running off site)
 - **Pests** (activities with the potential to attract, harbour or breed rodents, mosquitoes, midges, flies, stable flies)
 - **Lack of privacy**
- Some low impact exposure to nuisances may be tolerable, but they can cause stress and discomfort that adversely affects the health and quality of life of residents and neighborhoods.
- Developers, builders and contractors have a responsibility to prevent public health nuisances from occurring. New developments and activities must comply with relevant current legislation before any construction commences. Additionally, developers, contractors and builders should ask themselves “how would I or my family react if I lived next door to this activity?”

How can the effects of public health nuisances be minimised?

Not all public health nuisances are legislated because they can be minimised by simple measures easily implemented by a developer, builder or contractor.

Be proactive and minimise the effects of public health nuisances by:

1. **Proper planning:** Design potential nuisances out of a new development or activity in the planning stages before site works, construction or installation commences.
2. **Communication:** Implement a neighborhood communication strategy:
 - **During planning:** inform residents early of the new development or activity and potential nuisances prior to construction.
 - **During construction:** Once construction has commenced keep residents informed of activities that will be occurring and the approximate times of the activity.

Communicate in advance and work with residents to reduce public health nuisances.





Planning

Designing out potential nuisances

The following information provides examples of the types of questions you may need to consider for common public health nuisances, prior to undertaking any activity or development. Further advice on potential solutions to these questions can be obtained from the relevant government authority.

▪ **Noise and vibration**

Vehicles, equipment, blasting activities or people can create unreasonable and excessive noise, impact noises, vibration and disturbances.

A Noise Management Plan for construction noise may be required to be submitted where the level of noise is either unreasonable or excessive or the time of the construction work is outside the times permitted.

Vehicles and traffic impacts:

- How many vehicles will be involved in the development?
- What days and time will they be on site?
- What days and time is work planned to commence and cease?
- Where will vehicles park?
- Will access to other homes or businesses be blocked for short periods?
- For ongoing activities, how many vehicles will visit the premises and at what time?
- Are delivery docks and waste collection and storage areas located away from houses?
- Will parking impede weekly residential waste and recycling verge collection?

Equipment:

- During construction, how long will equipment be operating for each day? During what time periods? Will evening, night work or weekend and public holiday work be required?
- Is the equipment located an adequate distance away from neighbouring living areas?
- Are air conditioners, exhausts or pool pumps located an adequate distance away from neighbouring living areas?

People:

- How many people will be on site each day?
- What time will they be on site during each day?
- Will there be loud music from radios or bands or other noisy activities?

▪ **Odour**

Odour may be a by-product of some industries such as businesses involved with food, animals, waste disposal, chemicals, fuels, etc.

- Are there odours to be controlled?
- Where will odours be generated on site?
- Can odour affect homes, schools or other workplaces?
- What measures are there to remove odours?
- Where are exhausts located?
- What odour management control systems are planned for effective odour control?
- Has the separation distance between offensive outlets and fresh air intakes been evaluated against relevant Australian Standards and applied to the building under construction? Are the neighbouring properties protected against nuisances from contamination?

▪ **Dust and Particulates**

Minimise any dust and nuisance particulates that may be generated (including smoke) that could affect neighbours or their properties and animals. NB: Dust control using rye and other grass can cause impacts to health.

- What dusts may be generated by machinery, clearing land, burning waste packaging materials vehicles or deliveries to the site?
- How will dust and particulates management be controlled? Has a dust management plan been developed?
- Will weather conditions affect dust distribution and controls?





Delivering a Healthy WA

▪ **Visual pollution**

Signage, waste, vehicles, building design, storage, derelict structures and buildings, poor quality toilet facilities, disused or derelict vehicles and materials can contribute to visual pollution.

- Is the activity unsightly, visible or overlooked by homes, schools or other workplaces?
- Could the development be screened by trees or fences or other suitable screening methods?
- Can neighbours be inconvenienced by location of materials?

▪ **Light pollution**

Reduce light pollution from poorly placed lighting including security lighting.

- Does lighting comply with relevant Australia Standards?
- Do lights shine directly into neighbouring homes or properties?
- Is directional lighting used?
- Where are light poles sited?
- Are light poles temporary or permanent?

▪ **Waste and Waste Resources Recovery and Reuse**

Manage waste so it can be recovered, reused or recycled as a resource and is not unsightly, hazardous, attractive to vermin or creates wind blown litter off site.

- Where will waste be placed during activities?
- How will any waste generated by activities be controlled?
- Where will the onsite waste and recycling recovery and reuse bins, ablutions, ashtrays and bin stores be placed during construction?
- Will wastes be re-used or recycled wherever possible?

▪ **Liquids**

Liquids can cause damage to properties and create pollution that runs into nearby storm water drains that may eventually discharge into recreational water bodies.

- Are wash down process waters, cement handling and preparation, cement truck washing after delivery, brick acid washing waste, paint brush washings contained and not disposed onsite?
- Is storm water including water from silting and sand being washed, contained onsite and not discharged or permitted to run off site?

▪ **Pests**

Certain types of construction can potentially attract pests such as rodents, mosquitoes, midges, flies and stable flies.

- Is a mosquito management plan required?
- Will anything on site including food wastes, fertilisers or manures, attract and harbour rodents or promote fly breeding?
- Do rat baits need to be applied to a property before demolition (with appropriate containment to prevent animal or human access)?
- Will water in containers or other materials promote mosquito breeding?
- Will land clearing promote mosquito breeding?

▪ **Privacy**

Consider the privacy of neighbours, their activities and their homes.

- Have neighbourhood privacy issues been considered during consultation, planning and construction?

Communication

Implementing a neighbourhood communication strategy

A communication strategy is used to keep everyone informed of a development. Letting people know when, how and what is happening may help increase a person's tolerance to a particular nuisance that cannot be minimised e.g. temporary traffic closures.

The communication strategy should identify:

- Who may be affected by the activities and when
- Suitable methods of effective communication, and
- The messages that need to be communicated.





Who may be affected by the activities and when?

Identify all residents including surrounding sensitive premises, homes, schools and businesses that may be affected by the development or activity. When relevant for more significant activities, other key stakeholders (i.e. Council staff and councilors; sporting groups, Local Member of Parliament), should also be informed about the development or activity and possible impacts before it commences.

What methods of effective communication are suitable?

There are a number of simple and cost effective ways to communicate your messages including:

- Placing information cards or letters into letter boxes
- Placing a public notice in the local paper
- Making phone calls to key stakeholders (if relevant)
- Providing on site signage with details of construction and a contact person for complaints/site issues
- Being open to discussing concerns raised by neighbours
- Providing early notification to neighbours of service outages or access restrictions.

What kind of messages need to be communicated?

Messages that should be communicated to residents and other stakeholders should include:

- An overview of what is being built or renovated, the expected times, days and duration of the development or activity and any potential nuisances
- An explanation on the action that will be taken to minimise public health nuisances during construction
- A description of how any remaining public health nuisances may impact on residents and other affected stakeholders. Examples could include:
 - Times that noisy equipment is being used (periods of high noise/vibration)
 - Temporary traffic impacts, such as road closures/detours/deviations
 - Out of hours working and truck deliveries
 - Days when specialist equipment such as cranes may block driveways
 - Dates and times when power, gas or water supplies may be disrupted
- Contact details of the companies or individuals responsible for the activity including:
 - Contact names and telephone numbers for complaints/queries/comments/site issues
 - Physical street address of the Head office of company
 - Emergency telephone number that will be answerable and responsive.

**Remember: Keep residents and all stakeholders informed during planning and construction.
A happy neighborhood is a healthy neighborhood.**

For more information contact:

It is important you find out about your legal responsibilities prior to the commencement of any construction activities otherwise you may be subject to additional building costs, delays or penalties.

Further information can be obtained from:

- **Local Governments - Planning and/or Environmental Health Services**
For guidance on planning and construction approvals, local laws, waste collection, pest control
- **Department of Environment and Conservation - www.dec.wa.gov.au**
For guidance on noise, dust and particulates, waste, light, liquid waste, odours and contaminate sites/asbestos issues
- **Department of Health, Environmental Health Directorate - www.public.health.wa.gov.au**
For guidance on health impacts

