



## AC NOISE LIMITS (EXTERIOR MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT)

City of Larkspur Building Department  
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When reviewing building permits for installation of outdoor mechanical equipment, the City Staff is required to insure new, or replacement equipment will comply with applicable setback and noise limits of the Municipal Code. Noise generated by outdoor mechanical equipment, such as HVAC units, generators and/or pool equipment can become a divisive issue between neighbors and may result in requests for the City to initiate code enforcement to gain compliance with noise regulations. The City encourages property owners to exercise consideration for their neighbors when selecting the equipment itself, how it is housed, and where you place it on your property.

Chapter 9.54.040 Exterior Noise Limits provides the following limits:

Receiving Land Use	Time	Noise limit not to be exceeded for more than 30 minutes/hour (dBA)
Residential	7AM - 10 PM	50
Residential	10PM - 7AM	40
Commercial	Any time	60

Generally, compliance with sound limits may be achieved with number 1 and 2 below:

1. **Distance from shared lot lines.** All mechanical equipment is considered an “accessory structure” by code and must, at a minimum, meet the setbacks required by the applicable zoning district regulations. However, sound is diffused to a certain extent by further distancing the mechanical item from the neighboring property.
2. **Selection of mechanical unit.** All applicants should select mechanical equipment that is designed to emit a lower range of sound measured in decibels (dBA).

However, in some instances, it is necessary to propose the following:

3. **Housing.** Some equipment, particularly items such as emergency generators and pool equipment, must be housed in an insulated enclosure to achieve compliance. Venting should face inward toward the property the equipment serves.

### **Permit Submittal Requirements**

1. **Site plan** identifying the location of the main structure, proposed/existing location of equipment, dimensions of the equipment, and the distance between the equipment and property lines and structures. See sample AC site plan and generator handout at: [City of Larkspur Building Department Forms and Applications](#)
2. **Manufacturer's** specification sheets for proposed equipment which provide noise emission measured in decibels (dBA).

**NOTE:** **Acoustical Evaluation and Mitigation:** If it is determined that the proposed equipment would likely violate the noise ordinance, an acoustical evaluation by a certified sound engineer or acoustical consultant may be required. Relocation of equipment and/or mitigation of the excessive noise, such as insulated equipment enclosure and/or other measures, may be required. *For emergency generators a sound analysis by an acoustical engineer is required on all submissions.*