

# SLCC Noise Information

A study by the American Society of Interior Designers showed that office productivity would increase if workspaces were less noisy. Evelyn Talbott, associate professor at the University Of Pittsburgh Graduate School Of Public Health, says, "Prolonged exposure to loud noise can contribute to high blood pressure levels, as well as everyday aggravation, annoyance, and loss of tranquility."

Although some people may say that they function best in a noisy, hectic environment, research shows that decibel levels over 60 can reduce a person's attention span. Interestingly, a normal conversation takes place at about 60 decibels. The usual office background noise is about 45-55 decibels, but when workers are placed close together, or in rooms with many people talking at the same time, decibel levels can rise to 70 or higher.

Excessive noise is especially prevalent in many of today's office spaces which are based on "open plan" environments, where the din of routine activities can negatively impact worker productivity. The best way to decrease noise levels in general is to: 1) separate workers when possible, use sound-absorbing partitions between desks; 2) insulate hard floor with carpeting and wall surfaces with noise-absorbing paneling; 3) or install soundproofing material on ceilings.

Noise levels can be reduced by encouraging workers to not continually play music, and by putting office equipment, such as printers and copiers, out of the general workspace.

It has been determined that continual exposure to sounds at or above 80 decibels may cause permanent hearing damage. In such environments, special precautions must be taken. If you feel that noise levels in your area are excessive, contact Environmental Health & Safety by calling 801-957-4902

Some people are more disturbed by noise than others. For instance, someone who generally works quietly at their computer may be distracted when sitting next to someone who is continually talking on the telephone or listening to music. Workers should speak with supervisors when they're disturbed by noise. Many people think they're causing unnecessary trouble by voicing their feelings, but when everyone in the office is working at their preferred noise level, workplace harmony and productivity will be enhanced.