

Noise Pollution - Changes to the Noise Control Ordinance and an updated Code of Practice

This submission is from Chris Knop, a Hong Kong resident living next to the Swire Properties construction sites on Caine Road. In the interests of public health, the environment and quality of life for all Hong Kong residents, it calls for the implementation of:

1. No construction work on Saturdays (in addition to stipulations on Sundays & public holidays)
2. Working hours for construction work to change to 08:00-19:00 Monday to Friday
3. No percussive piling allowed, only newer methods that are now readily available such as bored piling techniques

These changes to take effect:

1. Immediately to the Code of Practice on Good Management Practice to Prevent Violation of the Noise Control Ordinance (Chapter 400) (for Construction Industry) and communicated as such to construction companies and property developers
2. As quickly as possible via LEGCO for changes to the Noise Control Ordinance Cap.400

Reasons:

1. Public health – stress and sleep deprivation. According to the WHO, “Excessive noise seriously harms human health and interferes with people’s daily activities at school, at work, at home and during leisure time. It can disturb sleep, cause cardiovascular and psychophysiological effects, reduce performance and provoke annoyance responses and changes in social behaviour.”
2. The Hong Kong Government moved to a 5 day work week and encouraged private sectors to do so. This was to “reduce work pressure and to improve the quality of family life.” The Noise Control Ordinance works against this measure because quality of family life is poor when construction noise is present 6 days per week from 7am.
3. Most companies now adhere to a **5 day work week giving Hong Kong people the weekend to enjoy with family and friends in peace and quiet**
4. Many property developers also adhere to a 5 day work week for their corporate and office staff yet continue to allow construction via their supply chain and contractors on Saturdays
5. Social responsibility in its essence is about companies acting in a responsible manner towards the community, going **beyond legal obligations** (in respect to a code of practice) before laws are enacted, however the Ordinance requires changes to provide mandatory legislation.
6. The **value and liquidity** of property surrounding new developments can be adversely affected due to construction noise and associated shaking, which generally goes on for a number of years.
7. Prospective buyers who are **owner occupiers do not want to live** in such properties described in point 6
8. **Rental income** that landlords receive is adversely affected as tenants do not want to hear construction noise and feel the building shaking from pile driving, especially on Saturdays and Sundays
9. Prospective tenants **choose to rent alternative properties which are quiet**, particularly on Saturdays and Sundays leaving landlords with unlet flats or forcing them to reduce rents
10. The shaking of neighbouring buildings caused by percussive pile driving can cause **cracks and other damage** to properties
11. Prospective buyers who are looking for an investment **do not want to purchase** such properties due to points 8 & 9 & 10
12. 7am is not a socially responsible time to allow work to commence on weekdays, 8am is proposed

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For Consideration by: **Subcommittee on Issues Relating to Air, Noise and Light Pollution**