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Aircraft noise causes illness

Study at Cologne-Bonn airport points to heightened risk of cardiovascular ailments owing to night-time aircraft noise

About one third of the population has voiced problems concerning aircraft noise, according to a representative survey done by the Federal Environment Agency (UBA). Five million people report severe disturbance. The complaints lodged by the population are justified, as also reflected in a new UBA study by Prof. Greiser titled *Risikofaktor nächtlicher Fluglärm [Risk factor night-time aircraft noise]*. As concerns cardiovascular diseases, it has been proven that the risk of disease in persons affected by increasing exposure to aircraft noise is higher than in those not exposed at all. For psychiatric disorders there is one consistent result: the incidence of depressive disorders in females is significantly higher.

These results corroborate an earlier UBA study on pharmaceutical drugs which showed a higher incidence of prescriptions for persons exposed to night-time aircraft noise. A large-scale study done in the vicinity of various European airports (HYENA study) in 2008 also determined noise-related health risks, namely that persons with greater exposure to night-time aircraft noise often have higher blood pressure than persons who reside in quieter residential areas. "The latest results demonstrate that we must do more to protect citizens from noise. In the name of sustainable mobility we must take a critical look at which night-time flight activity is really necessary", said UBA President Jochen Flasbarth.

The Cologne-Bonn airport has volunteered to undertake noise abatement measures which, although they reduce noise risk, are unable to completely prevent the health impact of aircraft noise. On account of special conditions which exist at the Cologne-Bonn airport (it has a relatively high volume of night-time flight activity), further analyses should follow since, for example, there is no answer as yet to whether the results of the study relating to risk exposure due to night-time aircraft noise are directly applicable to other airports.

The *Risk factor night-time aircraft noise* study (in German) is on the Internet at http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info,-medien/mysql_medien.php?anfrage=Kennummer&Suchwort=3774; appendices at http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-medien/mysql_medien.php?anfrage=Kennummer&Suchwort=3775.

More information on the following topics is at the UBA web site:

Noise exposure: *Umweltbewusstsein in Deutschland 2008, Ergebnisse einer repräsentativen Bevölkerungsumfrage [Environmental awareness in Germany 2008: Results of a representative survey].*

http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-medien/mysql_medien.php?anfrage=Kennnummer&Suchwort=3678

Pharmaceutical drug study : Greiser E, Greiser C, Janhsen K. *Beeinträchtigung durch Fluglärm: Arzneimittelverbrauch als Indikator für gesundheitliche Beeinträchtigungen; Forschungsprojekt im Auftrage des Umweltbundesamtes [Impact of aircraft noise: drug use as indicator of health impacts; research project commissioned by Federal Environment Agency].*

http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-medien/mysql_medien.php?anfrage=Kennnummer&Suchwort=3153

HYENA Study: Press Release 3/2008; Hypertension and Exposure to Noise Near Airports: the HYENA Study Jarup, Babisch, et al:

<http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-presse/2008/pd08-003.htm>

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