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Proactive noise protection saves money and trouble

Traffic noise remains serious environmental problem

Road traffic remains the greatest source of noise, according to the latest noise survey by the Federal Environment Agency, which polled 70,000 participants. The survey says that road traffic noise and aviation noise are the most annoying. "Efforts to protect the public from traffic noise are not yet adequate in Germany. There are still too many people who suffer from excessive noise levels. There is much work ahead in the area of noise protection," said UBA President Jochen Flasbarth ahead of International Noise Awareness Day on 27 April 27.04.2011. Noise increases the risk of cardiovascular disease. Through transposition of the EU Environmental Noise Directive into German law, municipalities have been responsible for drawing up noise action plans since 2005. The results of the UBA survey have affirmed how necessary this is. Since noise incurs billions in damages to the national economy, noise abatement measures can save a lot of money.

Road traffic continues to be the major source of noise annoyance in Germany, followed by aviation. 45% of those polled indicated they are greatly disturbed by airplane take-off and landing noise. The third most mentioned source of noise- rail traffic- disturbs more than 40% of those surveyed. Industrial and commercial noise are also significant causes of annoyance in Germany.

noise is not only a nuisance, it can also trigger illness. Epidemiological studies point to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease among persons chronically exposed to road traffic noise. It is believed that some 4,000 heart attacks per year are brought on by road traffic noise. Therefore, additional noise abatement measures are necessary.

The European Environmental Noise Directive should be brought to bear more comprehensively than it has to date in order to reduce the impact of environmental noise on the public. The key element of the directive is the Noise Action Plan, which is drawn up by municipalities and identifies all noise abatement measures. Each and every citizen is entitled to make proposals on how to reduce noise and to promote these in cooperation with politicians and public administrations. The noise protection instruments that are already in place must now be put to more intensive use than before and developed further. But just how can road traffic noise be reduced? One way is to by pave roads with noise reducing materials. The right material for optimal noise reduction can reduce noise levels by 2 to 4 dB(A), even on inner city roads with a 50km/h speed limit.

More information:

The online survey by the Federal Environment Agency polled 70,000 respondents and ran from 2002 to early 2011. The survey has now been continued in updated form. Anyone with Internet access can participate: <http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/laermumfrage/index.htm>

An analysis of the online survey is here (in German): <http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-medien-e/3974.html>.

For more information on how to combat noise see: <http://www.umweltbundesamt-daten-zur-umwelt.de/umweltdaten/public/theme.do;jsessionid=904C4E69ADCCB108D1FAB03BDC2788D4?nodeident=3173>

Dessau-Roßlau, 26 April 2011