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Noise Awareness Day 2008

UBA calls for regional measures to combat high levels of noise annoyance

Noise continues to provide a serious source of stress on the population, a fact corroborated by a survey conducted in large congested urban areas and around roads with heavy traffic. Constant high levels of noise can have an adverse impact on the human body, triggering among other things sleep disorders or cardiovascular problems. The Federal Environment Agency (UBA) has proven this fact through numerous studies. Since 2005 the European Environmental Noise Directive has instructed cities and municipalities to reduce noise levels. To do so municipalities in Germany had to create noise maps by 30 June 2007, which systematically documented noise annoyance experienced by the population, e.g. along high-traffic railroad tracks, large airports, hospitals or schools. Municipalities are now called upon to draw up "noise action plans" by which to make marked improvement in the noise situation. "In the near term we must eliminate noise annoyance associated with health risks. In the longer term, we must achieve compliance with the precautionary values set by the World Health Organization, namely daytime levels of 55 decibels, 45 at night", said UBA President Prof. Dr. Andreas Troge. "The EU must further reduce limit values for noise from motor and railway vehicles and more clearly define a limit on noise emissions from vehicle tyres", continued Troge.

Noise can cause illness. This has been proven in studies commissioned by UBA. The risk of suffering a heart attack increases by roughly 30 percent in men who live in areas with high levels of traffic noise over 65 decibels. There is a direct correlation between aircraft noise and higher use of pharmaceutical drugs to treat high blood pressure, cardiovascular diseases, or depression. These are the results of an analysis of data on more than 800,000 persons living in the vicinity of a German airport with night-time flight activity. People who are exposed to high levels of night-time aircraft noise suffer high blood pressure more often than those living in quieter areas. An increase of night-time aviation noise of ten decibels is enough to elevate the risk of high blood pressure in both men and women by 14 percent.

Cities and municipalities are to draw up their noise action plans by 18 July, in which they determine technical and planning measures aimed at minimising noise impact and problems.

The UBA is in favour of better integration of noise action planning into other urban activities designed to reduce environmental pollution, e.g. clean air or transport development plans. More information on the European Environmental Noise Directive and on the environmental action objectives of noise abatement activities is here:

<http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/laermprobleme/ulr.html>

The *Transportation Noise and Cardiovascular Risk* study can be called up at

<http://www.umweltdaten.de/publikationen/fpdf-l/2997.pdf>.

The German language study *Beeinträchtigung durch Fluglärm: Arzneimittelverbrauch als Indikator für gesundheitliche Beeinträchtigung [Aircraft Noise Annoyance: Prescription drug use as indicator of health impact]* is available at

<http://www.umweltdaten.de/publikationen/fpdf-l/3153.pdf>

The *Hypertension and Exposure to Noise Near Airports: the HYENA Study* publication is available in English and has been published on the Internet at:

<http://www.ehponline.org/docs/2007/10775/abstract.html>

More press releases on the subject of noise:

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

<http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-presse/2007/pdf/pd07-008.pdf>

<http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-presse/2006/pdf/pd06-047.pdf>

<http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-presse/2006/pdf/pd06-025.pdf>

<http://www.umweltdaten.de/uba-info-presse/pi04/pd04-019.pdf>

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