

SFO Noise Monitor Thresholds are not in Compliance with State Law

Issue:

17 out of the 28ⁱ Permanent Noise Monitorsⁱⁱ controlled by the SFO Noise Office, do not comply with the California Code of Regulations Threshold standard of 55 dBⁱⁱⁱ. These 17 monitors have been set to a threshold of 65 dB. The SFO Noise Office has exemptions for 11 noise monitors to have their thresholds set to 63-65 dB^{iv}.

Why is this important?

This is important as the higher the threshold, the fewer noise events are counted and the reverse, the lower the threshold, the more noise events are recorded. People living under the flight paths constantly report at the Round Table that the noise and aircraft frequency is far worse than the Airport Director's Report figures suggest.

In addition, on September 12, 2014, Rep. Speier as part of the Noise Caucus, wrote to the FAA Administrator that the 65 DNL was not a true measure of the impact of noise and the metric should be lowered to 55 DNL^v. The monitors need to be set to the level at which they will measure i.e. 55 dB.

Noise results: Airport Directors Report Underreports Noise Events

The SFO Noise Office reported 57 noise events over 65 dB for the 24-hour period on 3/16/18 at the permanent Brisbane Noise Monitor. When we counted the number of noise events over 55 dB directly attributable to aircraft using the SFO Noise Office flight tracking web page^{vi}, we counted 234 noise events. This is a 4x increase above the number the SFO Noise Office reported. This undercounting is a problem for each of the 11 cities that has a permanent noise monitor.

In addition, the number of noise events over 65dB recorded on the flight tracking web page was 39% higher than the 57 the SFO Noise Office reported. There appears to be a problem with the method the Noise Office is using to count noise events and the method should be audited.

Resolution:

The SFO Noise Office needs to:

1. Immediately reset the 17 noise monitors thresholds to comply to the California Code of Regulations threshold standard of 55 dB
2. Audit the method used to determine a noise event and validate against the live tracking noise monitor results. Report to the Round Table on the method and metrics used by the next meeting
3. Re-analyze all noise and Airport Director's reports based on the incorrect threshold setpoints and re-issue by December 1, 2018
4. Continue to report the number of noise events at each monitor in the Airport Director's Report^{vii}
5. Develop a method to tie noise events to the Noise reports of the population underneath the flight paths. Currently there is no metric to link cause and the effect on the population being flown over.
6. Report the live flight tracking on the SFO Noise website for the previous 6 months so the affected population can confirm the effects. Currently the SFO Noise Office has reduced the playback from 4 months to 7 days. Oakland currently shows 3 months of playback.
7. Report to the Round table on how other Metroplexes have determined which noise monitors to reposition to reflect changing flight paths due to NEXTGEN.

ⁱ There were 28 permanent noise monitors listed on The Round Table Meeting 314 – Aug 1, 2018 Packet page 22

ⁱⁱ Department of Transportation letter dated December 13 2011 gave exemptions for 11 monitors to have their threshold set to 65 dB

ⁱⁱⁱ Code of Regulations. See highlighted areas on pages 1 and 3.

^{iv} Harris Miller 1.23.2009. Written by Gene Reindel, our Round Table consultant. Note the first paragraph of page 2
“Therefore the California standard noise monitor threshold and require tolerances are 55 dB and 1.5 dB respectively”.

^v Letter from Noise Caucus including Speier and others to FAA Administrator September 12 2014

^{vi} <http://volans.airportnetwork.com/JS3D/VolansPublicSFO.html>

^{vii} SFO Airport Director’s Report on Noise Monitors