

**“PUBLIC AGENDA”**

**TO:** Darlene Brander, Chairperson  
Board of Police Commissioners

**FROM:** Troy Cooper  
Office of the Chief

**DATE:** 2019 September 09

**SUBJECT:** Traffic Noise Due to Vehicle Mufflers

**FILE NO.:** 2,012-7

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**ISSUE:**

At the February 21, 2019 meeting the Board of Police Commissioners considered a communication from the City’s Transportation Division regarding traffic noise due to vehicle mufflers. The Board resolved that the information be received and forwarded to the Chief of Police for follow up and report.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That this report be received in response to the February 21<sup>st</sup> resolution of the Board.

**Written by:** Patrick Barbar  
Staff Sergeant, Traffic Section

**Approved by:** Larry Vols  
Inspector, Specialized Uniform Operations Division

Mitch Yuzdepski  
Deputy Chief, Support Services

**Submitted by:**

  
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Troy Cooper  
Chief of Police

**Dated:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(attachment) September 11, 2019

# Traffic Noise

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*Prepared by:* Staff Sergeant P. Barbar  
Traffic Unit

## Understanding the Problem

Noise pollution caused by vehicles is an issue that every Canadian city is struggling with to varying extents. Not only do unmodified cars create noise, but in a car culture such as ours, there are a significant number of modified vehicles that are intentionally equipped to emit louder than factory engine noise by installing aftermarket muffler systems.

In Saskatoon, it is these types of cars that generate the majority of public complaints relating to noisy traffic. Although some types of motorcycles can also generate loud noise, their smaller numbers mean that significantly fewer complaints are received about them.

The prevalence of cars with modified muffler systems has increased in recent years, primarily due to popular culture. These are typically not what most would consider classic or collector cars, but rather are moderate performance imports that are easy to modify and for which a wide variety of accessories is available.

The Saskatoon Police Service typically receives complaints about noisy cars from all parts of the city. However, the bulk of complaints come from 8<sup>th</sup> Street and Spadina Crescent residents.

On 8<sup>th</sup> Street specifically, which for generations has been considered the “cruising” street in Saskatoon, the noisy car problem has become intertwined with a vagrancy problem in business’ parking lots. The Centre Mall is a primary example of this, where fights and other disturbances have erupted as a result of the large number of “cruisers” simply hanging out on the property.

On a typical summer Friday or Saturday night, several dozen of these modified cars will spend the night cruising 8<sup>th</sup> Street, accelerating heavily at green lights and stunting as they use legal u-turn areas that are provided at various locations. At times, 50 or more of these cars will occupy parking lots, such as the Wholesale Club at Preston Avenue.

With many of these cars, even the slightest acceleration will produce noise that can be heard for several blocks.

Some of our city’s events encourage this behavior. For example, during the Rock 102 Show and Shine weekend in August, a tradition known as Cruise Night has existed for decades. Although this is not a sanctioned event, thousands of cars descend on 8<sup>th</sup> Street every evening in order to show off and cruise. The noise generated during Cruise Night can be heard in neighborhoods several kilometers away.

## Legislation

Legislation that addresses the issue of noisy cars can be found in the Traffic Safety Act (TSA), the Vehicle Equipment Regulations Act (VER) and the Saskatoon Noise Bylaw.

Section 215 of the TSA states:

*No person shall create or cause the emission of any loud and unnecessary noise from a motor vehicle, a part of a motor vehicle or any thing or substance that the motor vehicle or a part of the motor vehicle comes into contact with.*

This is a very subjective charge and requires an element of intentionality on the part of the person causing the noise. It also requires some evidence that someone may have been disturbed by the noise. The fine for this section is set at \$100.

Section 18 of the VER states:

*The vehicle shall have a muffler that effectively reduces combustion noise.*

This section is more objective but does require officers to have a minimal amount of mechanical knowledge as they will be required to describe the offending equipment in court. The fine is set at \$115.

Section 5.1 of the City of Saskatoon Noise bylaw states the following:

*Without limiting the generality of section 5, for the purpose of regulating motor vehicle noise, the following provisions shall apply:*

*(a) no person shall operate a motor vehicle in such a manner that it makes, continues, causes to be made or continues or suffers or permits to be made or continued any unreasonably loud or excessive noise;*

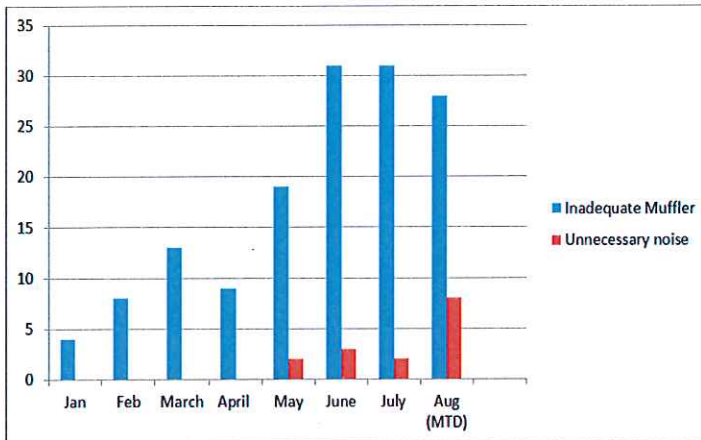
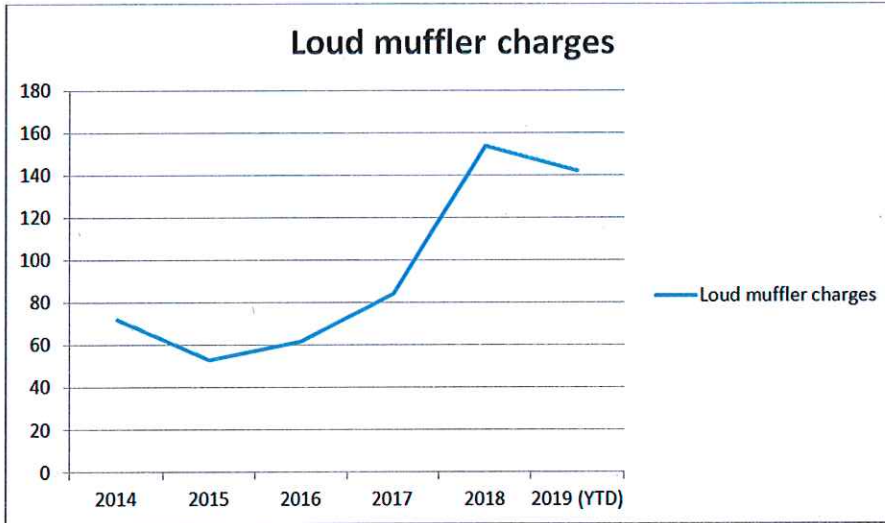
*(b) in determining whether the noise from a motor vehicle is unreasonably loud or excessive, a justice may consider any of the factors mentioned in subsection 5(2); and*

*(c) no person shall operate a motorcycle within the City of Saskatoon that is capable or emitting any sound exceeding 92 dB(A), as measured by a sound level meter at 50 centimeters from the exhaust outlet while the engine is at idle; or emitting any sound exceeding 96 dB(A), as measured by a sound level meter at 50 centimeters from the exhaust outlet while the engine is at any speed greater than idle.*

Subsection (a) creates a redundancy with the TSA. Subsection (c) does create a new offence for which specialized equipment and training is required.

## Enforcement

Over the years, enforcement has been done to varying degrees.



From 2017 to 2018, the amount of charges related to noisy vehicles almost doubled, and 2019 is on track to top 2018. This is attributable to better awareness by police officers with more education about the specific issue, and also to a greater number of offending vehicles on our roads.

Although the problem is a year round one, our statistics demonstrate that it is clearly of greater concern during the summer months.

When looking closely at 8<sup>th</sup> Street, it was determined that of all the traffic enforcement done in the city, 8<sup>th</sup> Street receives about 11% of the Summary Offence Tickets issued. However, when looking specifically at noise violations, 41% of all tickets issued in the city are issued on 8<sup>th</sup> Street.

In addition to enforcement activity, the Saskatoon Police Service Traffic Unit undertook a multi-faceted educational campaign in June of this year.

Primarily, the campaign involved social media messaging aimed at educating motorists about the impact of noisy vehicles on their fellow citizens. Using the hash tag #KeptItDown, the campaign spoke of respecting neighbours and of the nuisance created by loud cars in and near residential areas.

In conjunction with this, several voluntary testing clinics were set up for motorcycles at various locations during the month. It is important to remember that the bylaw only provides specific sound levels for motorcycles, and that this type of measurement cannot be performed on cars and trucks.

Police also conducted noise checkpoints where motorcycles were flagged into a testing area as part of an enforcement campaign. Very few of them surpassed the set limits, which many people may have interpreted as excessive.

Finally, Traffic Unit representatives spoke to local media outlets in an effort to get the message out to an even bigger audience. Several print and radio stories came out of those efforts.

At the same time, traffic unit members received training and information about the noise issue in order to be more effective on the enforcement front.

In July, SGI was consulted in order to find a solution to the compliance issue. Even when a ticket was given, motorists were not removing the offending equipment and several received subsequent tickets. This does not present a long term solution to the problem.

SGI agreed that they would send compliance letters to offenders, giving them 30-days to fix the issue or face the cancellation of their registration.

Saskatoon

## Number of noisy drivers ticketed on Saskatoon roads climbing



Police say 162 tickets for noise given out in 2018

Morgan Modjeski · CBC News · Posted: Jun 07, 2019 12:56 PM CT | Last Updated: June 7



A device used to measure decibel levels on motorcycles can be seen collecting a sample from a Saskatoon police motorcycle in a photo posted to the official Twitter account of the traffic unit with the Saskatoon Police

## Solutions

Moving ahead, a number of ideas have been identified by police, city staff and by members of the public that may help reduce the quantity of vehicles that produce excessive noise. Some of these are as follows:

**City led educational campaign:** An annual month long campaign undertaken by the city of Saskatoon aimed at educating citizens about the fact that their actions in creating loud noises, impact the quality of life of their neighbours and fellow Saskatonians.

**Quiet zone signage:** Signage that overtly states that motorists are entering residential areas and asking them to reduce vehicle noise.

**Higher fines:** Lobbying the province to impose stiffer penalties on noise related offences.

**Re-examining the usefulness of U-turn areas on 8<sup>th</sup> Street:** The argument made for the existence of these u-turn areas is to access business on the opposite side of the street. However, 22<sup>nd</sup> Street has a similar configuration without any u-turn lanes. The lanes contribute to the noise problem and other traffic issues such as collisions and stunting.

**Noise monitoring stations:** The city of Edmonton was employing four such stations. Through usage, they determined that they could not use these as an automated enforcement option. Furthermore, the display on the stations, which was meant to raise awareness about noise levels, actually caused a large proportion of motorists to produce more noise in an effort to see how high they could get the reading. As of May, 2019, Edmonton operates staffed noise monitoring units. They use Community Peace Officers to operate the units and to ticket violators. This is being done as a pilot project at this point and no data is available about its effectiveness.

## Conclusion

Clearly this problem is more complex than any individual or agency can solve on its own. A collaborative effort will be required to initially address this issue and to bring awareness of it to our city.

A multifaceted approach needs to be undertaken by the City of Saskatoon and partnering agencies to ensure the proper awareness, education and enforcement is provided.

Noise is a part of urban life, as a city, we need to decide how much we can accept and what we are prepared to do to either come up with solutions or to simply accept the status quo.