ACOUSTICS FORUM

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INTRODUCING THE NOISE DATABASE

Over the past several years researchers from the National Acoustic Laboratories (NAL) and the HEARing CRC have been measuring noise levels at some of Australia's noisier recreational environments using personal noise dosimeters. Recently, these measurements have been collected together to form the NOISE (Non-occupational Incidents, Situations and Events) Database, which is available online via a new website: http://noisedb.nal.gov.au/.

The data are organised into seven main categories: Attendance at sports venues, Active recreation and sport, Arts and cultural activities, Attendance at entertainment venues, Travel, Domestic activities, and Other. These, in turn, are organised into various subcategories. Measurements come from a wide range of venues, including inner-city nightclubs, large concert venues and sporting stadia, international race tracks, the New York subway, and local school discos!

Researchers, acousticians, policy makers and other people interested in knowing more about the hearing health risks of recreational noise are invited to search the NOISE database and consider whether they have similar research data they could contribute to the database. Currently there are almost 900 measurements on the database and we hope to expand this over time.

There are two main features of the website. There is a search function, in which you can obtain a list of noise measurements in a particular category and subcategory. If one conducts a 'simple' search, the output will be shown onscreen. The database computes the average noise level (in L_{Aeq}) and exposure (in Pa^2h) and provides a list of measurements. If one conducts an 'advanced' search, more detailed output is provided in a spreadsheet and users can specify whether they want to restrict the output to just NAL data or all data; data from Australia or elsewhere; and data from calibrated equipment or all types. The second main feature of the NOISE database is an upload function, in which users can contribute their own data. Contributors are invited to format their data using the instructions provided online and then upload it via the website. Once the data are received, they will be verified, and if appropriate, the data will be added to the NOISE database.

It is hoped that the NOISE database will be a useful source of leisure noise measurements that are reliable, up-to-date and accurate. It is intended to support acousticians, researchers, policy makers and hearing health advocates to identify the leisure activities that pose a real risk to hearing health, so that we can make positive steps towards reducing noise exposure in these environments.
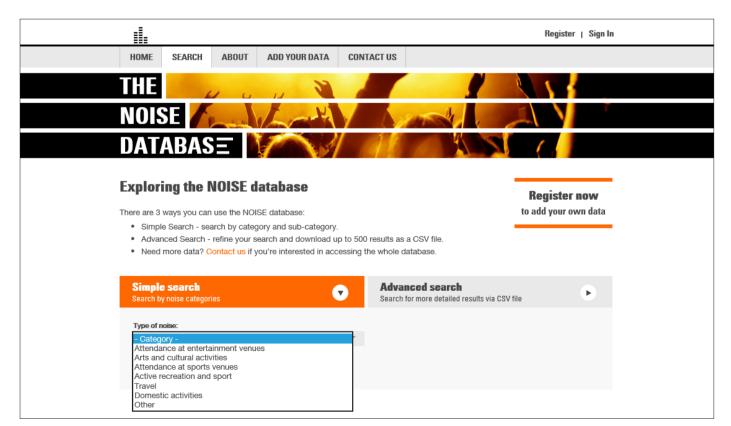
We look forward to welcoming you to the NOISE Database.

Figure 1 Search screen of the NOISE database.