

INDUCING "BUY-QUIET" PURCHASING ATTITUDES THROUGH SIMPLIFIED PRODUCT NOISE RATINGS

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An International-INCE Symposium organized by INCE/Europe in cooperation with BAuA (Germany) and CIDB (France) and in partnership with CAETS

<http://www.bruit.fr/buyquiet>

BACKGROUND AND PERSPECTIVE

Over the last three decades much progress has been made by acousticians and noise control engineers to determine the noise emissions of products in a standardized manner. These include household appliances, machines and equipment, power tools, IT products etc. However, the noise labels or ratings currently used are neither understood by the public nor widely available to them. There is a global lack of understanding by manufacturers, suppliers, and potential users alike.

The EU has developed an *energy* label for products that is simple, well understood, and widely available. It has proven to be an effective incentive to encourage the consumer to buy more energy-efficient products. The publication of this information has induced major reductions in product energy consumption over the last 15 years. In a similar way, providing simple, understandable noise information to the general public should ultimately increase the availability of low-noise products.

The complexity of existing *noise* ratings along with their relative scarcity has not induced the user to develop a "buy-quiet" attitude nor has it stimulated competition needed to produce quieter products and thus encourage low-noise design. The reasons for this are varied:

- * Complexity of the dB scale and frequency dependence,
- * Confusion between sound power, sound pressure, and other metrics being used to characterize the noise,
- * Statistical quantities and procedures to determine values to declare,
- * Complexity of test codes including dependence of noise on operating and installation conditions,
- * Information generally presented as informative rather than comparative,
- * Absence of test codes for noise ratings of specific product families, and
- * Limited information on product noise released by manufacturers and suppliers.

The objectives of the symposium are to stimulate "buy-quiet" purchasing attitudes through simplified noise ratings and to provide manufacturers with the information needed to design low-noise products. Necessary steps are to:

- * Confirm the need for meaningful product noise ratings,
- * Reiterate and list the benefits of providing noise information to consumers and other stakeholders,
- * Discuss the pros and cons of existing noise ratings,
- * Discuss the lack of a "buy-quiet" attitude for products and machines used in all activities (at home, during leisure, at work, in industry,) and among all buyers (individual consumers, professional buyers, stakeholders, and advertising media),
- * Help shape solutions that will satisfy the needs of both practitioners in the field and in the industries they serve and the public in making purchasing decisions,
- * Propose and discuss designs for comprehensive and uniform product noise ratings that will serve the needs of manufacturers and suppliers, and
- * Propose and discuss designs for simplified product noise rating schemes that will assist consumers in making purchasing decisions.

STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAMME

Following the introductory session, there will be five topical sessions of presentations, each one focusing on a different aspect of the “buy-quiet” and product noise rating issues. Each of the sessions will be followed by an open discussion period for comments and questions.

Introduction and background

Quieting the world by inducing a “buy-quiet” attitude among product purchasing groups.

Providing information on product noise emissions

Review the purpose and requirements of current practices. Address the deficiencies of these practices and suggest proposals for improved noise ratings and how to implement them. Consider the advantages of establishing “range-of-levels” databases for different products.

Tailoring product noise information to different purchasing groups and different product types

How can published noise information on declarations and/or labels be tailored to different purchasing groups such as consumers, corporate purchasing departments, factories and other workplaces, large construction companies, municipalities, etc., or to different product families such as IT equipment, outdoor machines, power tools, household appliances, lawn and garden equipment, etc.? Can noise ratings be included as part of eco-labels?

How information on low-noise products can boost market share and profitability for manufacturers

How has the EU energy label induced a breakthrough in product performance and offerings in less than 2 decades? How has low-noise design and promotion stimulated markets for products (e.g. vacuum cleaners, household appliances, air conditioning equipment)? How could incentives be devised and used to support, rather than thwart, the interests of manufacturers?

Encouraging all purchasers to “buy-quiet”

A review of “buy-quiet” programs in the USA and Europe and the recognition/awards offered for low-noise products given by certain non-governmental organizations.

Roles stakeholders can play in encouraging the use of product noise ratings and fostering “buy-quiet” attitudes

Many groups “hold a stake” in a quieter world. How can they play a role in encouraging and expanding the use of product noise ratings? Such groups include:

- Non-governmental organizations,
- Government agencies,
- Consumer groups and publications,
- Professional societies,
- Standards organizations,
- Trade associations, and
- Acoustical consultants.

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