

Dubai Municipality Noise Limits

 Local Order No. 61/91 and Dubai Building Code 2021, Part H, Section H.10

Two frameworks, one project

Local Order No. 61/91 limits what your development does to its neighbours, measured at the site boundary. The Dubai Building Code governs what occupants experience inside. Passing a Dubai Municipality boundary inspection tells you nothing about whether tenants will complain on day one.

01 Boundary noise limits

Local Order No. 61/91. Limits are measured at the site boundary and vary by land use zone and time of day. **Daytime runs 07:00 to 20:00, night-time 20:00 to 07:00.**

ZONE	DAYTIME	NIGHT-TIME
Residential areas with light traffic	40–50 dBA	30–40 dBA
Residential areas in downtown	45–55 dBA	35–45 dBA
Residential areas which include some workshops or commercial business, or residential areas near highways	50–60 dBA	40–50 dBA
Commercial areas, downtown	55–65 dBA	45–55 dBA
Industrial areas (heavy industry)	60–70 dBA	50–60 dBA

The 20:00 transition matters. A chiller plant that complies at 19:55 may not at 20:05, when limits drop by up to 10 dBA.

02 Internal acoustic performance

Dubai Building Code 2021, Part H (Indoor Environment), Section H.10. Sets minimum performance for architectural and building services acoustics across all occupancy types.

| General scope (H.10.3.1)

Four areas must meet minimum standards:

- Internal noise from building services
- Internal airborne sound insulation
- External noise sources such as road traffic and aviation
- Internal impact sound pressure levels and reverberation times

OCCUPANCY	REFERENCED DESIGN STANDARD
Residential	UK Approved Document E and BS 8233
Healthcare	Dubai Health Authority Regulations and DHA health facility guidelines; conform to HTM 08-01 or FGI Guidelines
Schools	Building Bulletin 93 (BB93)
Business	BS 8233 and British Council for Offices Guide to Specification
Industrial and assembly libraries, museums	BS 8233
Hotels	Operator brand requirements. In their absence the DBC defaults to UK Approved Document E for “rooms for residential purposes”

Higher or lower values may suit a given project, but any departure from the referenced standards should be based on analysis rather than assumption, and should involve an acoustic consultant.

| Building services noise (H.10.3.2)

Total services noise in a space must account for three contributions:

- Structure-borne noise from plant transmitting through the building fabric
- Airborne noise breakout from plant rooms into adjacent occupied spaces
- External plant noise breaking back in through the building envelope

A number on its own is not compliance

The DBC is explicit that building services noise must be free from tonality, impulsiveness and attention-catching character. A level that meets its NR or NC target but carries a discernible tone will generate complaints regardless of what the instruments show.

| Sound insulation (H.10.3.3)

The building envelope, internal floors and partitions must meet **Table H.17 or better**. The code states plainly that on-site performance will be numerically lower than laboratory-tested performance. Flanking transmission through junctions, structural connections and service penetrations reduces what a manufacturer’s published figure delivers in a real building. Design targets should specify to a higher laboratory value than the on-site minimum.

| Reverberation control (H.10.3.4)

Where reverberation control supports speech intelligibility or the performance of public address and voice alarm systems, the room must include enough sound-absorbing material to achieve the reverberation times set out in the applicable standard.

03 Construction noise permits

High-impact construction outside the standard working hours of 07:00 to 20:00 requires a permit before work begins.

LEAD TIME 48 hours Minimum notice via the DM portal	PERMIT COST AED 1,000 Approximate, per night	STOP-WORK EXPOSURE AED 60,000+ One night, all-in
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Each application requires a valid building permit, a detailed Noise Management Plan, a specific justification for out-of-hours work, and baseline noise monitoring data from the site perimeter.

A single complaint can halt a concrete pour

Standard plywood hoarding is rarely enough. Acoustic blankets and purpose-built enclosures for static plant such as generators and dewatering pumps are generally required, and continuous perimeter monitoring established 48 hours ahead gives you the defensible baseline needed to challenge an unfounded complaint.

| When the decisions get made

Both frameworks are shaped by choices taken at Concept and Schematic Design. Layout, adjacencies, structural strategy and the MEP cooling approach are set by the end of Schematic Design. Reopening them at Detailed Design costs programme and money. Early acoustic input is the only cost-effective way to satisfy both frameworks at once.

This sheet is a summary for design teams. It does not replace Local Order No. 61/91 or the Dubai Building Code 2021, and zone classification for a specific plot should be confirmed with Dubai Municipality.

Full commentary at focusacoustics.com