

Relentless construction annoys neighbours in Metro Vancouver

Some cities will bend their own noise rules, for a fee

BY KELLY SINOSKI, VANCOUVER SUN AUGUST 22, 2014



Most Metro Vancouver municipalities, including Vancouver, say they don't allow construction on Sundays. In fact, it's written in their noise bylaws that such work can only be done Monday to Friday — usually from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. — and on Saturdays, from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., although the times vary from city to city.

Ann Cammell can't wait for The Lauren apartment building in Vancouver's West End to finally be built.

Not because she wants to live in the new 22-storey monolithic tower, but because Cammell wants the construction — the jackhammering, the noise and the rumblings that she has put up with for two years — to stop.

"It's been a bit of a trial," Cammell said. "It gives you a headache when it goes on and on and on."

While the noise can seem non-stop, most Metro Vancouver municipalities don't allow construction on Sundays.

In fact, it's written in their noise bylaws that such work can only be done Monday to Friday — usually from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. — and on Saturdays, from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., although the times vary from city to city.

Surrey, for instance, allows construction at 9 a.m. on Saturdays, while Richmond doesn't give its

residents a break on Sundays and holidays, allowing construction from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

But there are exceptions to every rule and it seems some cities, including Surrey and Vancouver, are willing to bend them.

For a fee — Vancouver charges between \$148 to \$296 and Surrey \$50 — the cities allow companies to apply for an exemption of the bylaws so they can work extended hours, including Sundays. The reason, city officials say, is to get infrastructure projects built more quickly, or at a time when there is less traffic and fewer people on the streets.

“We have a fair share of construction projects that have to go outside the noise hours because they’re large capital projects,” said Jas Rehal, Surrey’s manager of bylaws and licensing. “We look at all the projects. If we feel it’s not time-sensitive or required outside normal noise hours, we’ll reject it.”

Rehal didn’t know offhand how many exemptions Surrey has issued in the past year, but said “I signed off on a couple in the last few weeks.”

Vancouver, however, issued 112 noise exemptions to allow work on a Sunday over the year — 63 of those for construction work at the Main Street-Terminal Avenue SkyTrain Station. Only 25 applications were denied, with about half due to late notice and the rest for an inability to provide a valid or acceptable reason.

Last Sunday, for instance, road construction crews were allowed to start work at 4 a.m. in Vancouver to finish paving a section of Broadway from Oak to Granville. The same hours will apply this coming Sunday because “it enhances productivity, as they encounter fewer delays due to traffic,” the city said in an emailed statement.

“In order to accommodate the flow of traffic along this extremely busy corridor, a schedule was created that would allow the city to complete the work as quickly as possible in order to limit the impacts to residents and nearby businesses,” the city said. “The stretch will be completely repaved in just two weekends.”

The city maintains that while it recognizes the work “can be an inconvenience, we make every effort to inform nearby residents and businesses of planned activities.”

According to city stats, Vancouver has received 803 noise complaints related to construction from August 2013 to now, up marginally over the last five years. From August 2012 to August 2013, there were 779 complaints, up from 670 for the same period a year earlier.

The city didn’t provide any details on the Lauren Building.

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