

MMA: What's all the Noise about Noise?

Over the past couple of years, the **Massachusetts Motorcycle Association (MMA)** has been hard at work fighting Noise Ordinances in various cities and towns throughout the Commonwealth. The issue of excessive noise is certainly not a new issue, but has escalated in recent years with the increase in the number of motorcycles on the road.

Indeed, some of the "noise" isn't just motorcycles. In fact, in a recent "sound enforcement" exercise in one northeastern Massachusetts Community – 25 vehicles were cited, but only ONE was a Motorcycle!

However, while indeed some of the "noise" can be attributed to sources other than Motorcycles, our biggest enemy, unfortunately, is ourselves!

In some cases, "altered exhaust" doesn't simply mean an after-market manufacturer, it means removing baffles and/or using pipes meant for off-road use. In other cases, we can observe other bikes on the road who just seem to want to throttle-up in the center of a quiet neighborhood and/or under an overpass; these seemingly innocent acts add up creating anxiety and anger in everyone involved.

As a result, some cities and towns have been reacting to public pressure to clamp down on motorcycle noise by leveraging statutes and regulations that really are not designed for enforcement nor applicable to consumers.

The MMA is actively engaged in a campaign to help stem the tide. Our mantra is, "Education, not Legislation", with an emphasis on sharing what we can do to help people on both sides of the issue

What exactly is the issue, then?

Excessive noise comes from multiple sources including non-compliant exhaust systems, radios and others. In Massachusetts, the Law clearly defines a testing procedure and limits for sound. Many muffler systems, including those from after-market suppliers, are in compliance with the Massachusetts General Law, however that assumes that you are riding respectfully.

Riders who alter their exhausts by removing baffles and/or using excessively loud pipes, including "straight pipes" (pipes without baffles altogether) are a large part of the problem and are well in excess of the legal sound emissions levels. Riders who throttle-up and/or rev their engines in community or residential settings also contribute heavily.

Another contributing factor can be motorcycles in large groups, especially in older tourist locations where building spacing is close and tight. Larger groups create more sound pressure and the tight building configurations amplify and reflect the sound.

How can I help?

Replace non-compliant exhaust systems – The MMA is pleased to offer voluntary sound testing throughout the Commonwealth and can help you determine if your exhaust baffles have worn out or if the muffler is otherwise not in compliance with the MGL.

Ride with Respect! – When riding in local community settings, keep the throttle down and don't draw unnecessary attention to yourself! Shifting to the next highest gear early and keeping the engine below 2500 RPM can make all the difference in the world!

Spread the Word! – Share your concern with fellow riders that if we don't start earning some respect, we may eventually find ourselves with bigger hurdles to overcome.

What exactly is the Law?

All motor vehicles and motorcycles require a muffler in "good working order". An original muffler may be replaced or exchanged with a muffler in "good working order".

A muffler in "good working order" may not be altered in an effort to increase the exhaust system's noise level. If the baffle plates, screens, or other original parts have been removed the muffler is considered altered.

If the internal baffles have not been removed, it prevents excessive/unnecessary noise, it prevents pollution, & is in compliance with state sound emission requirements.

The Massachusetts General Law (MGL), Chapter 90, Sections 7S, 7T, and 7U clearly define the definition of Motorcycle Sound Emissions. These laws also refer to the 540 CMR 3.02 and 3.03 which are the Code of Massachusetts Regulations pertaining to the RMV proscribed sound limits and testing procedures respectively.

Sound testing involves the use of a properly calibrated meter to test the "sound pressure levels" produced by your motorcycle. For Motorcycles manufactured in 1986 or later, for example, the maximum limit for Motorcycle Sound Emissions is 99 db. The MMA has many members who are trained in the testing procedure and law for Massachusetts and is very willing to work with you, your organization, or your community to establish a voluntary sound testing



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What *is* the "EPA Stamp"?

The "EPA Stamp" refers to an embossed "certification", typically found on the tailpipe/muffler of your Motorcycle. This "Stamp" is a labeling guideline as part of the Federal Code of Regulations, specifically Title 40 CFR Subchapter G, the Noise Abatement Programs.



Within these sections, Part 205, Transportation Equipment Noise Emissions Controls, Subpart D refers to Motorcycles and Subpart E refers to Motorcycle Exhaust Systems.

More importantly,

- The EPA stamp is a requirement of the Manufacturer, not the consumer.
- The EPA stamp is designed to protect the CONSUMER, not to be used as a law enforcement tool.
- The EPA stamp doesn't have to be on the tailpipe, & although often is, it's often obscured...
 - Bikes like Ducati, etc., are under the seat.
 - Bikes like Harley Davidson and Honda may be under a saddle bag or heat shield.
- Federal Title 40 CFR 205 Subpart E Document is a Manufacturer's Compliance Standard requiring a plethora of highly engineered equipment and a very specific testing environment: something that simply cannot be duplicated by a law enforcement officer in the field, on the side of the road or in a parking lot.
- According to Title 40 CFR 205.166, the EPA stamp *expires* in 1 year or 3729 miles (6000km) after an "Acoustical Adjustment Period, whichever comes first simply due to the breakdown of internal components within the exhaust system itself.
- To be effective, a procedure for testing sound pressure levels in the real world, whether it be performed for enforcement or for voluntary compliance purposes, needs to be conducted in conformance with real world standards. This is exactly what existing Massachusetts Sound Enforcement Law (specifically MGL Chapter 90, Sections 7S, 7T, and 7U) does.

THE MMA REMINDS YOU...

WHEN IN TOWN, THROTTLE DOWN!

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