



We Hear You: The OC Sound Policy

From time to time, we receive questions about Oasis City Church's choice on sound volume levels during our church services. We want you to be assured that we make the safety of our church one of the highest priorities. We take any questions about the safety of our volume levels extremely seriously and are continuously evaluating what will serve our congregation most effectively in the long run.

Standards of Safety

Because the staff of Oasis City Church are not scientific experts, we are thankful that the US government has done much research in the area of hearing safety. The government's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has researched and published its recommended sound levels for employees and guests. You can find their chart of safe sound levels at this web address:

https://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=STANDARDS&p_id=9735

The pertinent table is located partially down the web page and is labeled "TABLE G-16 – PERMISSIBLE NOISE EXPOSURES." To summarize what it says, the following sound levels are permissible, given the lengths of time indicated:

15 minutes per day = 115 dBA¹
30 minutes per day = 110 dBA
1 hour per day = 105 dBA
1.5 hours per day = 102 dBA
2 hours per day = 100 dBA
3 hours per day = 97 dBA

The table goes further, but we will stop there since it is very rare that the church will have more than one hour of constant music in a particular service, let alone more than three hours.

¹ dBA is short for decibel measured in the "A" rating scale. It is simply a label to indicate that the number is a measurement of sound volume.

Applying These Standards to Oasis City Church

In order to adhere to these standards at the OC, we use a decibel meter to measure the volume levels. The meter is located at the main sound board and is monitored consistently to ensure that we are not exceeding our desired levels. For most services, we target a sound level of 90dB to 95dB. Only occasionally will we go beyond that level, though sometimes the levels may reach as high as 100dB at a peak moment.

At this point, we have to note a couple technical details in order to fully explain our measurement system. First, our meter measures in both dBA and dBC. dBC responds more like the human ear, and as a result it will score higher than a meter measuring in dBA. For instance, 90 dBC will register around 86 dBA. Because dBC measures higher than dBA, if we are able to meet the OSHA safety levels using our dBC meter, we actually are below the safety levels indicated. Second, the volume level in the auditorium is not perfectly even throughout the room, so there could be a difference of 2 dB more or less.

Examples for Consideration

Let's take a few examples in order to work this out in real life.

Regular Attender:

A regular attender will normally experience about 35 minutes of live music on a Sunday morning. Let's round up to one hour to be safe. That person can listen to music at 105 dB without concern for hearing damage. The normal service sound level of 95 dB is well below that threshold.

OC Team Member Attending Both Services:

An OC Team member, or any other person who attends both services in the auditorium, will experience about 70 minutes of music on that Sunday morning. Let's round up to 1.5 hours to be safe. That person can listen to music at 102 dB without concern for hearing damage. Again, the 95 dB is well below that threshold.

Student Attending OC Youth:

The occasional times we go past 95dB typically happen in the meetings aimed at the younger generation of the church. A person attending an OC Youth meeting will experience about 20-30 minutes of music. Let's round that up to one hour. They can listen at 105 dB without any hearing damage. Again, even the highest levels of 100dB are below the threshold of danger.

Finally, we must acknowledge that even within the range of safe sound volume, different people will have different preferences. Scientific findings will not necessarily make it easier for people to enjoy sound levels that are higher than they desire. The sound technicians and Production Director are responsible to ensure that the sound levels do not exceed safety standards. However, within those guidelines, the pastors responsible for meetings are the ones who choose the sound levels for their meeting. If you have concerns about a specific meeting you have attended or will attend, please contact the pastor who is responsible for that meeting.

Recently we have also become aware that some people have hearing problems that may cause a level of physical discomfort due to certain sounds or the overall volume. If this is your experience, please know that we are very sorry for the discomfort. The discomfort does not necessarily mean that your hearing is being damaged. You may want to have your hearing checked by a professional audiologist to learn if there is anything you can do to reduce the discomfort.

We want to make you aware that we offer earplugs at the Guest Services area in the Lobby if you feel like you need extra hearing protection. Our Ushers may also have them on hand in the Sanctuary. They are individually packaged for your safety. You may also choose to listen to the worship team outside the doors of the auditorium, or in the commons area, as the experience is heard throughout the building.

In Conclusion

We continue to experiment to find what is working best for us. We want the volumes appropriately loud, and will continue to work on the right mix for our building and church.

Thanks again for your comments and questions about our sound levels. We appreciate your courage to bring your thoughts to our attention, and we hope that your concerns have been addressed here.

If you have further questions or comments, please feel free to contact me by email: joel@oasiscitychurch.com.

Sincerely,

Joel Lugo
Production Director
2/28/2017