

# NAVAL AIR STATION WHIDBEY ISLAND (NASWI) NOISE COMPLAINT SYSTEM



## BACKGROUND

Sound is vibrations in the air that can be generated by multiple sources. When sound is invasive or unwanted, it is often considered noise. In general, individual responses to noise vary, and are influenced by several factors including:

- The activity an individual was engaged in at the time of the noise event
- The individual's general sensitivity to noise
- The time of day or night
- The length of time an individual is exposed to a noise
- The predictability of noise
- Weather conditions.

Noise contours and land use recommendations are based on average annoyance responses of a population, but some people have greater noise sensitivity than others. Noise complaints typically are made only by a small percentage of the people who are actually bothered by noise. Press attention, community organizing, the community's overall size, and other news can also affect the number of complaints.

The number of noise complaints from communities that neighbor NASWI has risen in the past few years in a disproportionate ratio when compared to increases in flight operations or regional population growth. As both Command and staff adapt to an unprecedented number of complaints, NASWI has been actively transitioning to a more efficient process for collecting and handling noise complaints, given available resources. There is no Department of Defense (DOD) instruction requiring military air stations to develop a noise complaint system. Also, there are no national standard operating procedures for collecting and handling noise complaint data. However, recognizing the importance of providing methods for community members to voice their concerns regarding aircraft noise, many air stations have developed systems for collecting noise complaints. Based on national best practices, NASWI has developed a noise complaint process tailored to the installation's unique situation, resources, and personnel.



## PURPOSE OF THE NOISE COMPLAINT SYSTEM

All levels of the chain of command at NASWI practice noise sensitivity awareness and discuss community noise concerns during various meetings and forums. We understand that noise complaints are related to the intensity and frequency of the events, as well as individual sensitivity, and can arise outside the areas depicted within published noise contours. The purpose of the NASWI noise complaint system is to assist the installation in maintaining compliance with FAA flight regulations and air station standard operating procedures in order to minimize the effects of noise on neighboring communities. To this end, NASWI investigates noise complaints to determine if the operation that likely caused the noise event was compliant with current regulations and procedures. These investigations ensure that both Navy and public interests are protected and support ongoing communication between the base and communities.

The NASWI noise complaint system is not an avenue for individuals to comment on their general dislike of aircraft noise, the Navy, or the military. While those comments are received and recorded through the noise complaint system, they are not investigated. Complaints will not change the flight patterns of current operations, change the hours NASWI operates, relocate Growler aircraft somewhere else, or close the installation. Noise will be ever present when aircraft are flying and flight operations at Ault Field and Outlying Landing Field (OLF) Coupeville are conducted in support of DOD requirements.



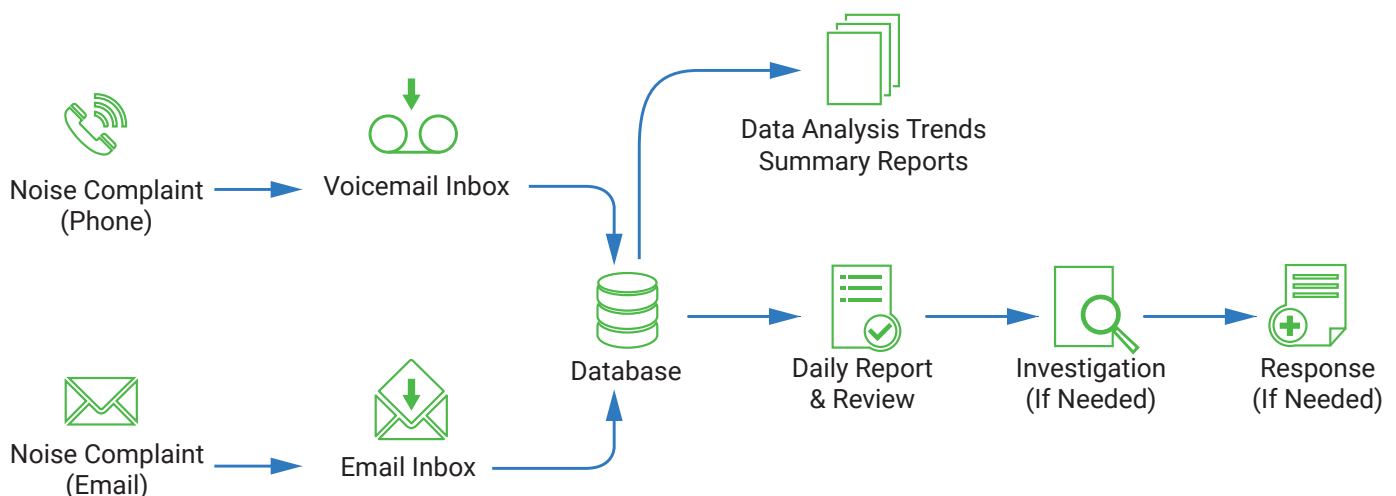
## NASWI NOISE COMPLAINT SYSTEM PROCESS

Persons with complaints or comments may call a recorded complaint hotline at (360) 257-6665 or email at [comments@navy.mil](mailto:comments@navy.mil). Noise complaints that come in by phone are recorded. Complaints that come in by email are stored in a digital folder. Every day around midnight, the Operations Duty Officer listens to all recorded phone messages and opens every email from the previous day. They transcribe the caller/emailer information, date, time, location, and narrative into a database. A daily summary is then emailed to the NASWI Noise Team for review. The NASWI Noise Team compares complaints to the previous day's air operations to determine what event may have occurred during the time and place of the complaint. If warranted, a recommendation is provided to address the issue. The Community Planning and Liaison Officer maintains the noise complaint database for historical records and trend analysis.

## RESPONSE TO NOISE COMPLAINTS

If after investigation of a complaint, the NASWI Noise Team determines that a response is necessary, a base official makes a follow-up call or email to the individual who initiated the complaint and provides an explanation of the noise event. It is important for the local community to understand that the purpose of the noise complaint system is to focus on FAA flight regulations and air station standard operating procedures. Therefore, not all people who call or email will receive a response. In 2020, NASWI received over 3,800 noise complaints, the majority of which were from frequent callers and those living under or near primary flight tracks. Resources are not available to respond to every complaint, especially when aircraft are operating within FAA and air station parameters.

## NASWI NOISE COMPLAINT SYSTEM PROCESS



To report a noise event that may have resulted from an aircraft not following established FAA flight regulations or air station standard operating procedures call the complaint hotline at (360) 257-6665 or email [comments@navy.mil](mailto:comments@navy.mil).