



# Generator Installation Standards and Exceptions Informational Handout

## GENERATORS

Generators as discussed in this handout are electricity generating devices installed to provide an alternative source of power for various land uses. Generators often create noise due to the use of combustible fossil fuels to create electricity. Because of the level of noise they are capable of generating relative to the ambient noise level, they are more likely to exceed noise standards as outlined in [Section 21.040\(A\) of the Implementing Zoning Ordinance \(IZO\)](#). The purpose of this handout is to outline how generators may comply with these noise standards.

Generators and other noise-generating power utilities may be used in two prescribed situations in Petaluma as outlined below: **Emergency Use Only** and **Long-Term Ongoing Use**.

EMERGENCY USE ONLY	
<b>The user of the utility has a medical or other emergent need for the utility.</b>	Medical or emergent needs includes medically prescribed electrical-powered devices or other electrically powered devices that are necessary avoid mortality or severe illness.
<b>The user if the utility is eligible for Reasonable Accommodation under <a href="#">The California Fair Employment and Housing Act</a> with respect to the utility.</b>	The California Fair Employment and Housing Act requires employers of five or more employees to provide reasonable accommodation for individuals with a physical or mental disability to apply for jobs and to perform the essential functions of their jobs unless it would cause an undue hardship.
<b>The utility is necessary equipment utilized for the purpose of responding to a declared state of emergency, used only during a declared state of emergency.</b>	A declared state of emergency for the purposes of noise-generating power utilities includes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) and specified periods of maintenance and testing</li> <li>ii. Imminent and unprepared loss of electricity subject to <a href="#">IZO 21.040(A)3b</a></li> </ol>
LONG-TERM ONGOING USE	
<b>Normal Use: 60 dBA maximum noise level</b>  <b>See attached:</b> <b>IZO Table 21.1</b> <b>General Plan Figure 10-1</b> <b>General Plan Figure 10-2</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Permit issued by <a href="#">Petaluma Building Division</a> and will be conditioned not to exceed ambient noise environment in your area unless in declared state of emergency pursuant to <a href="#">IZO 21.040(A)3b</a>.</li> <li>ii. During normal use, utility noise levels may not exceed 60 dBA as shown in <a href="#">General Plan Figure 10-2</a> unless:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The utility would be located in an area with an ambient noise level greater than 60 dBA as projected in <a href="#">General Plan Figure 10-1</a> or as measured by a qualified noise engineer.</li> <li>b. If the ambient noise level exceeds 60 dBA, the maximum allowable noise level shall be increased to reflect the maximum ambient noise level, up to a maximum allowed threshold of 75 dBA</li> </ol> </li> <li>iii. Consistent with <a href="#">Policy 10-P-3(c) of the General Plan</a>, the noise level of the utility shall be mitigated to not exceed ambient noise levels in the area by locating the utility inside the walls of a building or structure or on roof-tops of central units.</li> </ol>



**Exception Use and Process**

- i. Pursuant to IZO [21.040\(A\)6a-b](#), use of noise-generating utilities or activities may be granted an exception to any noise standard provided by the IZO, subject to limitations of proximity to noise sensitive uses, noise levels, time limits and other terms and conditions determined through a [Minor Conditional Permit \(MUP\)](#)
- ii. The [MUP application](#) shall contain information which demonstrates that compliance with provided noise standards would constitute an unreasonable hardship on the applicant, on the community, or on other persons; a separate application shall be filed for each noise source; provided, however, that several mobile sources under common ownership, or several fixed sources on a single property may be combined into one application
- iii. The process requires a fee as outlined in the [Fee Schedule](#)
- iv. A full [MUP](#) process as outlined in [IZO 24.030\(P\)](#) is required, including public noticing for residents within 500 feet of the property for 14 days before issuing permit approval, meeting criteria as outlined in [IZO 21.040\(A\)6c](#), and subjectivity to the same findings and conditions as required of the Planning Commission outlined in [IZO 24.030\(G-H\)](#)

**DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS**

For setback purposes, generators are comparable to heating, ventilation, and conditioning (HVAC) structures. As such, they are subject to setbacks for primary structures for the zoning district in which the property is located

Exceptions and allowed projection into required setbacks provided in [IZO Table 12.1](#) include HVAC equipment, stating that such equipment must be a minimum of 6 feet from the rear property line.