
FW: helicopter noise

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To: City Clerk <City.Clerk@juneau.gov>
Subject: helicopter noise

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Please pass these comments on to the Visitor Industry Task Force

Helicopter Noise

I am an 84 years old woman attempting to live out the rest of my life at my home on Fritz Cove Road in Juneau, Alaska. That is becoming more and more difficult because of the constant helicopters going behind and over my house. Sometimes they begin at 8 AM and don't stop until after 9PM. They start in April and go through September. It has made living in my home in these months close to impossible. People have inferred that I am too sensitive, that I should just get over it, etc.

I decided to see if there is any concrete information about helicopter noise. It turns out there are many studies because helicopter noise in particular is a huge problem in many places. It has to do with the machines themselves and how they move through the air.

I have long suspected that the particular impact on my house has to do with the elevation and placement of my home. I noticed that the noise and particularly the vibration is not as bad at the end of my driveway, a vertical drop of several feet from my living space, both outdoor and indoor. It turns out I am probably right.

There is extensive information on the science of helicopter noise and why it is perceived as one of the most annoying of mechanical noises. The simple explanation is that the rotors are airfoils and produce various pressures on the air. It is this effect on the air that causes the noise and vibration. The whole science is quite complex and has to do with rotor tip vortices, speed and direction of the aircraft, and a whole host of other factors.

One interesting factor is that the actual decibel level produced is not extremely high, so measuring decibel level doesn't prove the annoyance. (This is stated despite the fact that I cannot hear a 747 in full take off or landing mode if there are a fleet of helicopters coming and going at the same time. I can just forget about any birdsong.) It is the movement and pressure of the air that is so disturbing. The aircraft also emit low frequency vibrations that are felt rather than heard. That must be what knocks my pictures out of alignment, or the pounding sensation I feel sitting in my chair. That combined with the blade slap of the rotors is why closing all the doors and windows does not solve the problem. On warm days in the summer that would not be possible anyway.

In addition to annoyance there is considerable evidence that noise is a big contributor to health

issues. It is one thing to have continuous frazzled nerves, and quite another (although probably related) to having raised blood pressure and cardiac issues. If the amygdala, the stress detection center of your brain overstimulates your endocrine system sending too much cortisol, adrenaline, or other chemicals through your body, and combines with hyperactivating the sympathetic nervous system; over time that can lead to the risks of heart attack and stroke. These studies are beyond annoying. They are downright scary.

Here is another scary thing. I had attempted to live with my complaints because everyone kept telling me how much helicopter tours add to the economy of Juneau. I had assumed helicopter companies have to pay 5 percent sales tax, which on an average \$700 tour would be considerable. I called the city and asked. I was astounded to hear that air tours are not taxable. The ground portion is, but not the flight. So how exactly is that figured out and how much is it? Nobody could tell me. One person suggested that helicopter companies are left to decide what portion is ground versus air and therefore how much they have to pay.

I assume that somewhere there is a spreadsheet that will tell someone exactly how much these tours bring into the city. Do they pay airport fees, and does that balance out the wear and tear on infrastructure?

I don't even want to think about the damage being done to the icefield through physical contact and the fossil fuel intensive addition to our climate change problem. Helicopters have their uses in emergencies and remote construction. Is it really worth the toll it takes on people subjected to the constant noise and health risks for six people at a time (hundreds of times a week) to spend a few minutes looking at the admittedly spectacular scenery around Juneau?

I'm not sure what I can do to make my life comfortable, short of just giving up and moving, which at this time due to financial factors in my life, just isn't going to happen. I am asking that people think about these issues and try to come up with some constructive suggestions. The city and the helicopter companies should take the lead. We know there is a serious problem that needs addressing sooner rather than later. It certainly cannot be soon enough for me

Sue Oliphant

