

AUSTIN SUCCESSFULLY MANAGES NOISE WHILE HOSTING MAJOR ENTERTAINMENT EVENTS

The entertainment industry is critical to the livelihood of Austin, Texas. Equally important is the quality of life for Austin's residents. The city required a noise monitoring solution that would allow it to continue hosting major events while minimizing noise impact on neighbors.



CHALLENGE

To continuously monitor and manage noise from festivals and live entertainment venues.

SOLUTION

A short-term, unattended noise monitoring service: Noise Sentinel – On Demand.

RESULTS

Noise complaints were significantly reduced at Austin's Fun Fun Fun Fest and the city now mandates noise monitoring at large entertainment events.



Photo by Anna Hanks



BACKGROUND

Austin, Texas is known as the “live music capital of the world.” It is home to thousands of musicians and hundreds of entertainment venues of all sizes.

Over time, population growth has resulted in increasing numbers of residents living in the downtown area. With businesses and residences in close proximity, the city’s numerous festivals, outdoor patios, rooftop bars, etc., are contributing to an increase in noise complaints from neighbors.

Historically, city officials used sound level meters to take on-site five-minute sound level

“THE REAL-TIME TRACKING OF DECIBEL LEVELS DURING OUR FESTIVAL HELPED US IMMEDIATELY RESPOND TO BOTH OVERALL NOISE AS WELL AS PROBLEMATIC FREQUENCY RANGES.”

Bobby Garza, General Manager at Transmission Entertainment, creator of the Fun Fun Fun Fest

measurements to gauge noise compliance. This method didn’t account for noise occurring when measurements weren’t taking place.

THE CHALLENGE

Austin’s Economic Development Department Music & Entertainment Division and Police Department sought a cost-effective noise

monitoring solution that would help resolve public noise complaints – while still capitalizing on the entertainment opportunities it enjoys as a music capital.

The city wanted a solution capable of providing continuous monitoring to more efficiently manage and react to noise issues as they occurred. It also required play back of historical information to gain insight into an exceedance.

The city scheduled a short-term noise monitoring project at its Fun Fun Fun Fest. It was important that it not only assess sound levels, but also identify low-frequency noise crossing the Colorado River and annoying nearby residents.

In addition, the city required a web page to build community relations. It sought to inform the public about the importance it placed on minimizing noise impact and improving engagement.



Photo by Ralph Arvesen



Austin also desired automatic reporting to efficiently analyze compliance with event noise restrictions.

THE SOLUTION

The city subscribed to Noise Sentinel – On Demand, a short-term, unattended environmental monitoring and management service.

The service included everything the city required for monitoring Fun Fun Fun Fest, including four noise monitoring terminals.

“NOISE SENTINEL’S REPORTING CAPABILITIES SEEM ENDLESS, AND THE ABILITY TO GENERATE AUTOMATIC DAILY REPORTS IS INVALUABLE.”

Don Pitts, Manager of Austin’s Music & Entertainment Division

“THE ABILITY TO GET LIVE DATA AND SHARE IT WITH STAKEHOLDERS HELPED MANAGE OUR INTERACTIONS WITH CITY OFFICIALS AS WELL AS EMPOWER OUR CITY PARTNERS TO ASSURE SURROUNDING NEIGHBORS THAT EVERY EFFORT WAS BEING MADE TO PROPERLY MONITOR LEVELS ON A MINUTE-BY-MINUTE BASIS AND RESPOND ACCORDINGLY.”

Bobby Garza

Noise Sentinel – On Demand enabled authorized users to remotely review noise levels, receive alerts, listen to audio recordings to investigate incidents and automatically produce reports with detailed real-time noise levels.

As with every Noise Sentinel – On Demand service, Brüel & Kjær experts remotely monitored the system 24 hours a day to ensure effective operation.

The easy-to-use web-based solution doesn’t require acoustical expertise. The system was virtually maintenance free – freeing city staff to work on other activities.

RESULTS

Using Noise Sentinel – On Demand, the City of Austin effectively monitored sound levels to minimize community impact and resolve issues fast. In particular,

there was a significant decrease in low-frequency noise complaints.

The city received immediate SMS alerts when noise levels exceeded defined specifications. These alerts enabled the city to quickly act on breaches and mitigate negative impact on surrounding neighbors. Conveniently receiving alerts meant city officials weren’t tied to computers and could quickly respond when required.

Automatic reporting

By automatically compiling noise reports, it was significantly easier to demonstrate compliance with noise restrictions.

Community engagement

Noise Sentinel – On Demand’s community website engaged the public by transparently sharing information and helping resolve inquiries.



Wider community noise monitoring

In response to the history of sound complaints generated during music festivals held in City Parks, and as result of the noise Sentinel monitoring success at the 2014 Fun Fun Fun Fest, the City amended their sound ordinance. The Music & Entertainment Division now writes Sound Impact Plan requirements for Parks events with attendance of greater than 7500 people. Among the requirements is real time sound monitoring.

Due to its positive results, the city has expanded its use of the managed service to include numerous venues and projects such as monitoring bars, outdoor patios

and construction sites to minimize their impact on people living nearby.

“Initially, we were uncertain about the direction we should take regarding noise monitoring – but now everyone is absolutely addicted to Noise Sentinel,” explained Pitts.

“Based on the positive feedback we received from festival staff, sound engineers, Austin Police Dept., Parks Dept. and residents alike, our City Council approved funding for a one year lease of three units. We’re now using the system to monitor and log data from a variety of activities including music festivals, entertainment districts and other

commercial noise complaints,” said David Murray, sound engineering consultant Austin’s Music & Entertainment Division.

CONCLUSION

Noise Sentinel – On Demand improved the City of Austin’s ability to monitor and quickly respond to noise disturbances. More importantly, it reduced the number of complaints.

By using the subscription service, the city cost-effectively leased everything required for its Fun Fun Fun Fest noise monitoring project. With the managed system, data was stored, shared and accessed for more effective collaboration and community engagement.

The success of the Fun Fun Fun trial led to the wider adoption of noise monitoring to keep Austin’s residents happy while its famous music scene thrives.

“AMONG THE MANY USEFUL SYSTEM FEATURES, IS OUR ABILITY TO PROVIDE THE PUBLIC WITH ACCESS TO LIVE DATA FROM THE SOUND LEVEL UNITS DEPLOYED IN THE FIELD.”

David Murray



Photo by Ralph Arvesen

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