

The Motorcycle Riders Foundation (MRF) has learned that the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has begun collecting data from the industry to consider lowering the allowable decibel level for motorcycles. Currently the allowable sound any vehicle can generate is capped at 83db.

The EPA has sent letters to nine companies that either import or build aftermarket exhaust systems or complete motorcycles. This small sample size is troubling for a couple of reasons. First, it is not representative of the much larger motorcycling community that will be affected by changing the regulation, rendering the survey results questionable at best. Second, any time a federal agency wants to spend taxpayer money to survey a group of 10 or more individuals or organizations, they must obtain approval from the US Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The approval process isn't easy and can often be drawn out, giving American citizens the right to weigh in on the agency's application for permission to survey. However, when an agency only contacts nine organizations, they don't have to tell anyone or get permission from the OMB to move forward on the survey, making the process lack transparency.

Why just motorcycles? It appears that the EPA doesn't want to curb all noise, or even all vehicle noise, just noise coming from two-wheeled vehicles. We at the MRF find that distinction discriminatory and simply unacceptable, not to mention that it suggests a more personal agenda and not an agency-wide push. What sort of impact will new decibel levels have on retailers and ultimately motorcycle owners? Alarming, this does not appear to have been addressed. After reviewing the survey questions, it appears that the EPA is only concerned with the impact on manufacturers.

While public correspondence has not revealed the EPA's true intention to lower the allowable decibel limit, the EPA indicated in a private phone call with the MRF that it would certainly not be raising the standard or keeping it the same. That leaves one option, lowering the decibel standard for motorcycles.

The MRF is working with Congress to get the EPA to explain their intentions and motivations. The MRF is also working to meet directly with the EPA to further determine exactly is going on with this issue.

You can view the actual EPA questionnaire on the MRF website at [http://www.mrf.org/pdf/EPA\\_questionnaire\\_June2010.pdf](http://www.mrf.org/pdf/EPA_questionnaire_June2010.pdf)