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THIS IS one of nine new noise monitors, recently installed at nine sites near Sea-Tac Airport. It is part of a $200,000 Port of Seattle project. Monitors will collect noise data, then transmit it over telephone lines to a computer, located in the airport parking garage.

At Sea-Tac

Port installs noise system

by Carolyn Logan

New noise monitors, standing in fields around Sea-Tac Airport, look like nine silent sentinels. Monitors will collect data from aircraft noise, sending it via telephone lines to a computer at the airport.

Results from the Port of Seattle noise system could impact local property owners, since noise-remedy programs draw on noise data.

But results won't be known until this fall, since engineers must first test all operations before accepting the equipment from E, G and G, San Diego.

"We don't want to pay for it until we see if it works," said Richard Ottele, Federal Way, a Port senior engineer who is in charge of the Project.

His "baby" costs about $133,000. He added that the whole project, including Port time and a noise consultant, runs about $200,000.

HERE'S HOW it works.

To start from the beginning, noise consultants Towne, Richards and Chaudiere, Inc., Seattle, recommended sites for field monitors.

"We chose sites in areas involved in the noise program, sites patterned after the California code," explained Oris Dunham, Jr., Port deputy director of aviation.

Nine sites ring the airport on the north, west and south. None is located on the east side.

Dunham explained that McMicken Heights' noise is not of the level required for noise-remedy programs.

Although not required by the California code, the Port added one monitor west of the airport and one by Glacier High School, according to Dunham.

Installation began with putting a wood pole into place, at a spot determined to be away from significant street and community noise. A location spot convenient to telephone lines was selected. A box was attached to each pole, so the monitor could be plugged into electricity, just as a householder plugs in a lamp. On top of each pole is a round device, intended to screen out wind noise.

A WATERPROOF microphone picks up noise, after a filter screens out frequencies of the type not heard by humans. The sound is transformed via electric signal to the computer, located on the fourth floor of the airport parking garage.

The mini-computer, about 2-feet-square, is located behind a wall map of the Highline area, visible to viewers outside the control center. The computer distinguishes between community and aircraft noise.

Viewers can see noise levels recorded in a box above each of the nine sites. Port officials caution that true numbers aren't visible yet, since equipment is being tested.

Once operational, red flashing lights on the map will indicate when noise limits are being exceeded. A green flashing light will show that an airplane is arriving or departing.

The center string of lights on the map informs that flights are either taking off or landing in a northerly or southerly direction.

In front of the map, a black console contains a device which can be activated to hear the actual sounds collected by the field monitor. For example, Midway Elementary School students can be heard talking on the playground, complete with audible words. Ottele said it was difficult to find a better Midway site, so the one near the school was chosen.

ADJACENT to the console is a Teletype, which gives hourly printouts of aircraft and community noise, both measured separately in units of dba (decibels "A" weighted).

Remote field locations are near the following:

Parkside Elementary School, 2104 S. 247th St.; South 226th Street, 150 feet east of 12th Avenue South; Midway Elementary School, 22447 24th Ave. S.; 200 feet north of South 200th Street, on the access road bisecting Tyee Golf Course; South 170th Street and 12th Avenue South; 75 feet north of South 146th Street, on an alignment midway between runways; 70 feet south of South 120th Street, between South 13th and 14th avenues, if extended; Glendale Junior High School, 1201 S. 104th St.; South 126th Street, west of 23rd Avenue South.