

# Bulletin 2026-03

April 17, 2026

## Guidance and minor administrative changes to Rule 012

The Alberta Utilities Commission (AUC) regulates noise associated with electric and gas utility pipeline facilities. As part of its regular review of [Rule 012: Noise Control](#), the AUC has assessed current requirements and methodologies to identify areas where greater clarity and consistency may be beneficial.

This bulletin serves two primary purposes:

- **Provide guidance**

The AUC offers interpretive guidance on several requirements and methods associated with Rule 012. This guidance is not binding but intended to assist industry participants in understanding and applying the rule effectively. It addresses common questions, clarifies technical requirements and outlines acceptable approaches for applying Rule 012. By providing this guidance, the AUC aims to promote consistency, transparency and best practices in noise assessments and management for energy-related facilities.

Note that the guidance is for the current requirements in Rule 012. No new requirements are being introduced to Rule 012. Detailed guidance is presented in Appendix A of this bulletin and is included in the rule as Appendix 10.

- **Communicate minor changes**

The AUC has implemented minor changes to Rule 012, which will take effect on April 17, 2026. These changes do not alter existing requirements; rather, they are intended to improve clarity and correct typographical errors. All changes are reflected in the blackline version of Rule 012 issued with this bulletin. Appendix B provides a summary of these changes, with survey-related terminology addressed collectively.

The revised Rule 012 and all associated documents can be found on the [Rule 012 web page](#).

For questions regarding Rule 012, or to provide suggestions on other areas of the rule that the AUC should consider clarifying in future updates, please contact Customer Inquiries at: [info@auc.ab.ca](mailto:info@auc.ab.ca) or [310-4AUC \(310-4282\)](tel:310-4AUC).

Alberta Utilities Commission

## Appendix A: Commission guidance for applying Rule 012

Section	Rule 012 requirements	Commission guidance
2.8	<p><b>2.8 No net increase</b></p> <p>(1) The concept of no net increase in relation to noise impact assessments may arise when the incremental sound added by a project to the baseline sound level results in a negligible sound level increase.</p> <p>(2) In cases where an applicant is proposing development of a facility where it is not practical or efficient to characterize baseline sound levels, the applicant may assume baseline compliance with the permissible sound level and use no net increase to justify that the proposed facility will have a negligible impact on cumulative sound levels. However, the predicted cumulative sound level must not exceed the permissible sound level by more than 0.4 dB.</p> <p>(3) When baseline sound levels are predicted to exceed the permissible sound level by 0.4 dB or less, the applicant is required to assess compliance for its proposed facility by adding noise contribution from its proposed facility to baseline sound levels.</p>	<p><b>Guidance on the no net increase approach under Rule 012</b></p> <p>The AUC clarifies that two distinct no net increase approaches apply to noise impact assessments (NIAs) under Rule 012:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>No net increase as specified in Section 2.8 of Rule 012:</b></li> </ul> <p>The AUC emphasizes that wherever it is practical to model or characterize baseline sound levels, an NIA should prioritize assessing baseline case compliance by comparing baseline sound levels to applicable permissible sound levels (PSLs), rather than assuming baseline compliance. The no net increase approach should only be used when it is not practical or efficient to assess baseline case compliance, and a clear justification must be provided explaining why this approach is applicable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>No net increase as specified in AUC letters to the Northeast Capital Industrial Association (NCIA) as a unique case under Section 2.7 of Rule 012:</b></li> </ul> <p>For unique cases where a comprehensive sound level survey is not practical, the Commission can ensure compliance with Rule 012 by approving a detailed noise management plan under Section 2.7, Noise management plans, of the rule. In 2013, the Commission approved the NCIA's noise management plan. In letters issued to the NCIA on <a href="#">September 16</a> and <a href="#">October 16</a>, 2013, the AUC specified that an NIA for any new facility in the Alberta Industrial Heartland (AIH) must demonstrate compliance through one of the following approaches, consistent with the approved noise management plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Predicted cumulative sound levels comply with PSLs set out in Rule 012; or</li> <li>• Noise from the proposed facility will result in no net increase relative to the existing baseline.</li> </ul>

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		<p>At receptors in the AIH area where baseline sound levels already exceed PSLs established in Rule 012, applicants are required to submit a standard NIA assessing noise before and after the proposed facility is constructed. In such cases, the expectation is that the noise levels will show no net increase as a result of the new facility, relative to the existing baseline. Specifically,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The predicted cumulative sound level must not exceed the baseline sound level by more than 0.4 decibels (dB).</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.2(2)(b);</b> <b>3.2(4);</b> <b>2.3 of Appendix 2</b></p>	<p><b>3.2 Noise impact assessment requirements</b></p> <p>(2) Sound source identification: ... (b) Indicate whether the sound data is from vendors, field measurements, theoretical estimates or another source. ... (4) Operating conditions:  It may be necessary to modify the manufacturer’s data to account for actual operating conditions. The noise impact assessment must indicate the design conditions, such as operating with open or closed facility building windows and doors or restricted modes of operation.</p> <p><b>Appendix 2 – Sound level descriptors</b></p> <p><b>2.3 Sound power and sound pressure levels</b></p> <p>... Sound power levels for specific equipment may be obtained from the manufacturer or by modelling the source using near-field sound pressure level measurements. ...</p>	<p><b>Guidance on establishing sound power levels based on best available data</b></p> <p>Sound power levels for a project should be determined using the best available data or methods. The Commission expects that NIAs will provide reasoning for sound data selection, including why it is the best available data.</p> <p>Modifications to manufacturer’s data to account for actual operating conditions are typically done by using conservative assumptions in the noise model. The Commission expects that NIAs will describe any assumptions used in the model.</p>

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<p><b>3.2(3)(b);</b> <b>Appendix 1;</b> <b>Example 3 of</b> <b>Appendix 6</b></p>	<p><b>3.2 Noise impact assessment requirements</b></p> <p>(3) Noise receptor identification: ...</p> <p>(b) In cases where no dwelling exists within 1.5 km of a facility property and the facility is adjacent to another energy-related facility that does not have a dwelling within 1.5 km such that the 1.5 km radius overlaps, compliance with the permissible sound level should be assessed on the non-overlapping portion of the 1.5 km radius. See Example 3 in Appendix 6.</p> <p><b>Appendix 1 – Glossary</b></p> <p><b>Noise receptor</b></p> <p>A noise receptor is any dwelling located within 1.5 km of the facility property boundary. If there are no dwellings within 1.5 km of the facility property boundary, a noise receptor is any point at 1.5 km from the facility property boundary that is reasonably suitable for habitation.</p> <p><b>Appendix 6 – Examples</b></p> <p><b>Example 3 – Noise impact assessment</b></p> <p>...The example demonstrates the concept of the area of overlap of two energy-related facilities at their respective 1.5 km facility property boundaries, and compliance with the PSL. ...</p>	<p><b>Guidance on defining noise receptors when 1.5 km criteria boundaries overlap and no dwellings within 1.5 km</b></p> <p>An NIA must account for cumulative sound levels, which include the sum of ambient sound levels, noise levels from the proposed facility, and noise levels from baseline case facilities, rather than relying solely on the general definition of a noise receptor.</p> <p>In situations where no dwellings are identified within 1.5 km of the project boundary, and the proposed project and one or more baseline case facilities have overlapping 1.5 km criteria boundaries, compliance with Rule 012 shall be determined by assessing cumulative sound levels at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The most affected point along the portion of 1.5 km criteria boundary relative to the proposed facility that does not overlap the other 1.5 km criteria boundaries,</li> <li>and</li> <li>• The intersecting points of the overlapping 1.5 km criteria boundaries, rather than across the entire overlapping area.</li> </ul> <p>This approach ensures that compliance is evaluated at the locations most affected by the proposed facility and at points of greatest potential combined sound contribution, while remaining consistent with the intent of Rule 012 to assess noise at the potentially most affected receptor(s).</p> <p>Refer to Example 3 in Appendix 6 of Rule 012 for detailed guidance.</p>

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<p>3.2(5)(e); 3.2(12); 4.1(6)</p>	<p><b>3.2 Noise impact assessment requirements</b></p> <p>(5) Factors to be considered and included in the model: ... (e) intermittency of noise ...</p> <p>(12) The predicted sound level for a facility operating intermittently for part of the daytime or nighttime period (e.g., solar project) is based on noise generated for the duration of the operation and must not be an average over the entire daytime or nighttime period.</p> <p><b>4.1 General</b></p> <p>(6) The measured sound level for a facility operating intermittently such as wind turbines or peaking units is based on noise generated for the duration of the operation and must not be an average of the entire nighttime or daytime period.</p>	<p><b>Guidance on accounting for noise intermittency in noise modelling</b></p> <p>Rule 012 requires computer models to represent facilities during periods when they are operating. Noise from a facility that operates intermittently must <b>not</b> be time-averaged across the entire daytime or nighttime period.</p> <p>However, this requirement does <b>not</b> mean that every individual source associated with a facility must be modeled as operating continuously. Rule 012 allows the intermittency of individual noise sources to be reflected in computer models. It is acceptable to apply a conservative usage factor to non-dominant sources that cycle on and off periodically during normal operations to account for intermittent effects.</p> <p><b>Example:</b> For a solar power plant that operates for only one hour during the nighttime period, modelling should predict noise levels and assess compliance with PSLs during the hour the plant operates, rather than time-averaging over the full nine-hour nighttime period. At the same time, it is reasonable for modeling to account for the fact that individual tracker motors will operate intermittently during those hours. In this case:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major project noise sources (e.g., inverter-transformer stations, battery units, battery inverters) should be modelled as operating continuously during the applicable daytime and nighttime periods.</li> <li>• Tracker motors may be modelled using a conservative usage factor to reflect their intermittent operation during normal project conditions.</li> </ul>
<p>3.2(5)(g)</p>	<p><b>3.2 Noise impact assessment requirements</b></p> <p>(5) Factors to be considered and included in the model: ... (g) source directivity considerations</p>	<p><b>Guidance on sound source directivity in noise modelling</b></p> <p>When considering sound source directivity in noise models, the following principles apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Known equipment orientation and detailed specifications:</b> Where source directivity may influence compliance and detailed manufacturer noise specifications (including directivity data) are available, the Commission requires that noise modelling and assessment account for</li> </ul>

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		<p>source directivity. Wherever possible, configure equipment so that the side with the lowest sound output faces the nearest receptor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Unknown equipment orientation:</b> If the project design is not finalized and equipment orientation details are unknown, it is acceptable to model equipment as omnidirectional sources. In such cases modeling equipment as omnidirectional point sources is considered appropriate and acceptable.</li> </ul> <p>For the final project update, noise modeling and assessment should account for source directivity as per the previous bullet.</p>
3.2(11)	<p><b>3.2 Noise impact assessment requirements</b></p> <p>(11) Use models that meet accepted protocols and international standards (e.g., ISO 9613, CONCAWE Report No. 4/81).</p>	<p><b>Guidance on noise modelling standards under Rule 012</b></p> <p>Section 3.2(11) of Rule 012 requires that NIAs use models that meet accepted protocols and international standards including ISO 9613 and CONCAWE Report No. 4/81. For the purpose of applying Rule 012:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ISO 9613 is the primary and accepted modelling standard for predicting sound levels from a proposed facility and for assessing compliance with the PSLs under Rule 012. The main purpose of using ISO 9613 in noise modelling is to predict outdoor sound propagation from industrial sources under standard conditions.</li> <li>• CONCAWE Report No. 4/81 is an acceptable supplemental modelling method that adjusts predictions to account for meteorological and atmospheric conditions affecting sound propagation based on measured data for a specific receptor. Accordingly, CONCAWE Report No. 4/81 may be used to compare measured sound levels with modelling results and support the assessment of prediction accuracy. However, it does not replace ISO 9613 as the primary modelling standard for predictive noise assessments.</li> </ul>

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4.1(2)	<p><b>4.1 General</b></p> <p>(2) For the purpose of determining compliance with this rule, noise is measured at a distance of 15 metres (m) from the most affected noise receptor(s) in the direction of the facility, rather than at the property line of the land on which the noise receptor is located. Other measurement locations may be used if it is physically impracticable or acoustically illogical to measure where specified.</p>	<p><b>Guidance on receptor placement for NIAs and measurement surveys</b></p> <p>When measuring, it is generally appropriate to measure noise at a distance of 15 metres from the most effective noise receptor to avoid capturing residential activities and to ensure measurements reflect facility-related sounds only. For predicting project sound levels in NIAs, it may be more acoustically logical to place the noise receptor at the centre of the assessed dwelling, because modelling does not involve physical monitoring equipment and therefore there will not be interference from residential activities. Receptor placement at the dwelling centre is considered representative of occupant noise exposure, provided the modelling incorporates appropriate and conservative assumptions consistent with Rule 012's requirements for sound propagation, receptor height, operating conditions, and cumulative sources.</p> <p>For determining compliance with Rule 012 using a comprehensive sound level survey, noise should be measured in accordance with Section 4.1(2) of Rule 012. That is, the noise receptor for the survey must be located at a distance of 15 metres from the dwelling, positioned toward the facility.</p> <p>The difference in receptor placement between predictive modelling (NIAs) and physical measurement (surveys) reflects the distinction between these methods and does not alter the intent or compliance requirements of Rule 012.</p>
4.5(2)(b); 4.5(5)	<p><b>4.5 Low frequency noise</b></p> <p>(2) ...</p> <p>(b) A clear tonal component exists at a frequency between 20 and 250 Hz. For the one-third octave frequency bands between 20 and 250 Hz:</p> <p>(i) the linear sound level of one band must be at least 10 dB or more above one of the adjacent bands within two one-third octave bandwidths, and</p>	<p><b>Guidance on tonality evaluation under Rule 012</b></p> <p>Rule 012 provides a detailed approach for tonality evaluation in subsection 4.5(2)(b), which specifies the tonal component criteria for assessing low-frequency noise conditions.</p> <p>In circumstances where tonality evaluation is required for all audible frequencies, not just low frequencies, the Commission will use this same approach as it has been successfully applied under Rule 012.</p>

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	<p>(ii) there must be at least a five dB drop in level within two bandwidths on the opposite side of the frequency band exhibiting the high sound level</p> <p>...</p> <p>(5) The Commission may require tonality evaluation for all audible frequencies in a comprehensive sound level survey ordered in response to a noise complaint.</p>	

## Appendix B: Rule revision table

Section/Subsection	Existing	Proposed changes
2.1 Table 1	Table 1 Basic sound level (BSL)	Table 1 Basic sound level (BSL) in dBA
2.1 Table 1	Notes: ... (4) Density per quarter section — refers to a quarter section with the affected dwelling at the centre (a 451-m radius). For quarter sections with various land uses or with mixed densities, the density chosen must be factored for the area under consideration on a prorated basis.	Notes: ... (4) Density per quarter section — refers to a quarter section the number of dwellings within an area defined by a 451-metre radius, with the affected dwelling at the centre (a 451-m radius). For quarter sections with various land uses or with mixed densities, the density chosen must be factored for the area under consideration on a prorated basis.
2.4(1)	The Commission uses its approval or permit and licence issuance date as a milestone for determining new dwellings. Dwellings constructed after the Commission issues an approval or permit and licence are considered new dwellings, and the method for determining permissible sound levels described in this section apply.	The Commission uses its approval or permit and licence issuance date as a milestone for determining new dwellings. Dwellings constructed after the Commission issues an approval or permit and licence are considered new dwellings, and the method for determining permissible sound levels described in this section applies.
2.8(1)	The concept of no net increase in relation to noise impact assessments may arise when the sound added by an incremental project to the baseline sound level results in a negligible sound level increase.	The concept of no net increase in relation to noise impact assessments may arise when the incremental sound added by an incremental project to the baseline sound level results in a negligible sound level increase.
5.1	If a noise complaint is filed by a resident of a dwelling near the facility after the facility is in operation, the licensee must meet the permissible sound level as determined in accordance with Section 2. This section does not apply where the resident is the person who constructed a dwelling under the circumstances set out in sections 2.3 and 2.4.	If a noise complaint is filed by a resident of a dwelling near the facility after the facility is in operation, the licensee must meet the permissible sound level as determined in accordance with Section 2. This section does not apply where the resident is the person who constructed a dwelling under the circumstances set out in sections 2.3 and 2.4.
Appendix 1 - Comprehensive sound level	The comprehensive sound level includes the ambient sound level, and noise contribution from existing energy-related facilities. The comprehensive sound level should be collected under representative conditions and should exclude abnormal noise events.	The comprehensive sound level includes the ambient sound level, and noise contribution from existing energy-related facilities. The comprehensive sound level should be collected measured under representative conditions and should exclude abnormal noise events.
Appendix 1 - Dwelling	N/A	<b>NEW:</b> Hotels and motels are classified as seasonally occupied dwellings and must be considered in a noise impact assessment.
Appendix 6 – Example 1	Example 1	Example 1 – Application of an A2 adjustment
Appendix 6 – Example 2	Example 2 – Noise impact assessment (simple calculation)	Example 2 – Noise impact assessment (simple Simplified calculation method)

Section/Subsection	Existing	Proposed changes
Appendix 6 – Example 3	Example 3 – Noise impact assessment	Example 3 – <del>Noise impact assessment</del> Consideration of cumulative effects
Appendix 6 – Example 3 (solution)	N/A	<b>NEW:</b> Assumption of compliance was used here to make the example simpler, but wherever it is practical to model or characterize baseline sound levels, an NIA should prioritize assessing baseline case compliance by comparing baseline sound levels to applicable PSLs, rather than assuming baseline compliance.
Notes for noise impact assessment flowchart: 1, 3:	Formula to calculate sound pressure level ( $Lp$ ) based on sound power level ( $Lw$ ): $Lp = Lw - 20 \log_{10}(R) - 5$ (assuming half sphere radiation) $Lp = Lw - 20 \log_{10}(R) - 8$ (assuming full sphere radiation)	Formula to calculate sound pressure level ( $Lp$ ) based on sound power level ( $Lw$ ): $Lp = Lw - 20 \log_{10}(R) - 5$ 8 (assuming half sphere radiation) $Lp = Lw - 20 \log_{10}(R) - 8$ 11 (assuming full sphere radiation)
Notes for noise impact assessment flowchart: 2, 4, 5:	Formula to add two sound pressure levels ( $Lp_1, Lp_2$ ): $Lp, \text{sum} = 10 \log_{10} \left( 10^{\left(\frac{Lp_1}{10}\right)} + 10^{\left(\frac{Lp_2}{10}\right)} \right)$	Formula to add two sound pressure levels ( $Lp_1, Lp_2$ ): $Lp, \text{sum} = 10 \log_{10} \left( 10^{\left(\frac{Lp_1}{10}\right)} + 10^{\left(\frac{Lp_2}{10}\right)} \right)$
Changes related to survey terminology	In individual relevant sections	The Commission intends to standardize survey-related terminology in Rule 012. Where applicable, the term sound level survey will be used in place of monitoring or noise survey.  The Commission maintains the term “ambient monitoring adjustment,” because this term has been used to describe the Class A2 adjustment since Alberta Energy Regulator Directive 038: Noise Control.