

Accepted Customs and Standards for Wind Machines for Direct Climate Control Within Commercial Agricultural Operations

The standards listed below define what are the “accepted customs and standards” as described in the county’s Right-to-Farm Ordinance and Exceptions to Noise Standards found in 22.10.120. When responding to complaints, the Agricultural Commissioner’s Office will use these standards to determine whether the wind machines are used according to proper and accepted customs and standards.

The Department of Agriculture continues to emphasize education and cooperation in promoting the Right-to-Farm Ordinance to the agricultural community and general public.

Many site-specific factors may necessitate the use of wind machines to protect crops such as avocados, grapes, citrus, berries, and other crops. Factors may include low temperatures, the duration of low temperatures, wind, relative humidity, arrangement of crops within the site, and the topography of the site.

Many crop-specific factors may necessitate the use of wind machines. Factors may include the type or variety of crop, stage of growth, crop health or other agronomic management needs. Wind machines may need to be used even when ambient air temperatures are several degrees above freezing.

The standards balance the need of growers to protect their crops while minimizing noise from wind machines to residential neighbors. The standards are as follows:

1. Wind machines should be used only for protecting crops from damage due to cold temperatures.
2. Operation of wind machines during the night period should be for protection of crops from damage due to cold temperatures. Any other operation, such as for the purposes of maintenance, should be undertaken during the day.
3. Temperatures and weather conditions should be monitored to ensure wind machines are only being used when necessary.
4. When new wind machines are to be permanently or temporarily installed, wind machines should be positioned a minimum of 300 feet (line of sight) from off-site residence(s). Techniques to further minimize noise from wind machines should be employed as site conditions allow, including using wind machine design models that may emit less noise toward a residence. In situations where noise cannot be further minimized near residences, the use of sprinkler irrigation may be a preferable tool to prevent damage to crops from cold temperatures.
5. Growers should proactively reach out to residences adjoining sites where wind machines will be in use. Such communication should include: the importance of wind machines for protecting crops, the environmental benefits of using wind machines to prevent damage to crops from cold weather compared to other approaches, an estimate of the times of year and range of temperatures in which wind machines may be needed, and contact information for the agricultural operation.
6. When a grower receives a complaint about the use of a wind machine from a neighboring residence, the grower should attempt to address the issue by repositioning wind machines that are portable or employing other techniques to reduce noise impacts when practicable.

###

Existing SLO County Ordinance:

Exceptions to noise standards. The standards of this Section are not applicable to noise from the following sources. ...

22.10.120 - Noise Standards.

Noise sources associated with agricultural land uses as listed in [Section 22.06.030](#) (Allowable Land Uses and Permit Requirements), including but not limited to wind machines used for direct climate control, water well pumps and pest-repelling devices, provided that the pest-repelling devices are used in accordance with accepted standards and practices.

Proposed Revision:

22.10.120 - Noise Standards.

Noise sources associated with agricultural land uses as listed in [Section 22.06.030](#) (Allowable Land Uses and Permit Requirements). Pest-repelling devices and wind machines used for direct climate control are both to be used in accordance with accepted standards and practices.