

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT TEMPLATE · STAFF REFERENCE

Investigation Checklist

Single-page reference for management and maintenance staff investigating tenant complaints involving low-frequency noise, vibration, or perceived disturbance.

1. Before entering the complaining unit

- Review prior complaints from this tenant. Patterns are diagnostic.
- Identify suspected source unit(s) and prior complaints involving them.
- Schedule the visit during a reported episode window — not at staff convenience.
- Bring the Complaint Intake Form. Do not rely on an A-weighted meter as a primary tool; it will not detect what is being reported.

2. In the complaining unit

- Remain in the unit for at least 30 minutes. Brief walk-throughs are inadequate; exposure is often perceived only with sustained presence.
- Sit or lie on the floor or against a shared wall. Low-frequency vibration is detected more readily through body contact than through air.
- Walk between rooms. Note whether sensations are stronger near specific walls or floors.
- Record start and end times of observation and any sensations perceived.
- Document tenant's symptoms verbatim. Do not paraphrase.

3. Cross-unit comparison

- Where possible, conduct a parallel observation in a vacant unit with comparable construction. A baseline strengthens any later finding.
- If other units in the same vertical or horizontal line have submitted prior complaints, flag the pattern.

4. Source unit assessment (where appropriate)

- Do not enter the suspected source unit to investigate a complaint without independent authorization (maintenance, lease-permitted inspection, or tenant consent).
- Note any large speakers, subwoofers, or bass shakers observed during authorized access. Do not photograph without consent.
- Note equipment placement relative to shared structural surfaces.

5. Documentation

- Record every step with a timestamp. Verbal-only investigation exposes the property in later disputes.
- Complete or update the Complaint Intake Form immediately after the visit.
- Send the tenant a written acknowledgment with date, time range, and a brief summary.

Escalate to professional acoustic assessment when any of the following occur:

- Three or more complaints from the same unit on the same issue
- Two or more complaints from non-adjacent units attributing to a common source
- Tenant has medical documentation tying symptoms to the unit
- Tenant has independent measurement data (accelerometer, infrasound monitor)
- Conflict between residents has been reported or observed
- Tenant has signaled intent to break lease, withhold rent, or pursue legal action

Common pitfalls to avoid

- Relying on a brief walk-through. Sustained presence is required.
- Relying on A-weighted decibel measurement. Standard meters do not register the relevant frequencies.
- Characterizing the tenant as agitated or unstable in the written record. Sleep deprivation from chronic exposure can produce that presentation.
- Closing the file without written notice to the tenant — the single most common source of escalation.

Operational reference from the Low Frequency Research Initiative. Not legal advice. Adapt to property procedure and applicable law before deployment.