

# They're sounding off

*Neighbors complain about annoying beeps, whistles*

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Residents in the northern corner of Milltown used to cherish the peace and quiet of their residential streets.

This spring, however, some noticed strange noises piercing their solitude. Now that the methodical beeps and periodic whistle have lingered for more than a year, homeowners say they've been driven to the brink of madness.

The source of the muted noises, which resemble the warning signal of a backing truck and a tea kettle whistle, is a weather/air pollution station just north of the Milltown border on the Cook College campus at Rutgers University.

According to Nathan Reiss, the meteorology professor responsible for the station, it emits short high-frequency beeps and a longer whistle every hour to track wind patterns and pollution levels.

But residents charge that a station partially financed by the state Department of Environmental Protection and built to counteract air pollution is actually causing noise pollution.

In her North Wilson Avenue home, with windows tightly closed against November winds and the methodical beeps, Janice Matseur is leading the fight to eliminate the noise.

"I feel like a rat in a cage," she said. "The scientists don't have to hear this, they just go to their lab and collect the data, but we're left to suffer."

Doug Warwick and Steve Abbott were working outside their North Wilson homes this week when the whistle sounded.

"Yes, it's annoying, we should have been consulted before they put that thing up," Warwick said over the muffled synthetic sound.

Abbott nodded in agreement and said, "I didn't complain, but it can be really annoying."

Other residents like Matseur and her mother, Veronica Meirose, did complain. Their outrage prompted a meeting with local politicians and Rutgers officials earlier this month.

Councilman Eric Steeber, who negotiated on the side of the borough residents, said a compromise was reached. Rutgers promised to turn the station off from 10 p.m. to 7 a.m. and during other periods in the day.

Since then the station has been turned off at night, which has curbed complaints of sleep deprivation among homeowners on Janet Court, Centre Street and North Wilson Avenue, the streets closest to the station, but Reiss said manufacturers advised researchers against limiting the emissions in the daytime. Rutgers officials

have continued to operate the station throughout the day.

Matseur now says she sleeps soundly, but "I hear it in my bedroom when I wake up, I hear it in the bathroom when I'm getting washed, I hear it in the kitchen at breakfast, I hear it when I go to my car, it's driving me crazy."

Meirose describes herself as perpetually stressed: "Just when my body starts to calm down, I hear it again. It's like a needle jabbing you every few seconds."

Noting that the station was erected in June 1994 and that a complaint was not filed for almost a year, Reiss said the decimal level of the noise is lower than the sound of crickets. He said he was surprised by the complaints.

Some who own homes closest to the station agree that the sound is tolerable. "It doesn't faze me, I can hear it, but it's just like having a bird chirp," said a resident who asked not to be identified for fear of angering her neighbors.

However, Reiss said he is sympathetic with those who are irked by the noise and has commissioned Rutgers designers to create sound barriers for the stations. He said he expects the barriers to be in place before spring.

Matseur said she won't be satisfied until the noise is completely eradicated: "They have taken away our quality of life with that intrusive discordant sound. I want that life back, I want our quiet residential street back."