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**NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS
ENFORCEMENT AGENCY (ESTABLISHMENT) ACT, 2007**

**NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL (NOISE STANDARDS AND CONTROL)
REGULATIONS 2009**



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NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL (NOISE STANDARDS AND CONTROL) REGULATIONS 2009

30th September 2009

In exercise of the powers conferred on me by Section 34 of the national Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (Establishment) Act 2007 and all other powers enabling me in that behalf, I, John Odey, Minister of Environment hereby make the following Regulations.

1. The purpose of these Regulations is to ensure maintenance of a healthy environment for all people in Nigeria, the tranquility of their surroundings and their psychological well-being by regulating noise levels and generally, to elevate the standard of living of the people by –
 - a) Prescribing the maximum permissible noise levels a facility or activity to which a person may be exposed;
 - b) Providing for the control of noise and for mitigating measures for the reduction of noise; and
 - c) Generally for giving effect to the provisions of section 22 of the Act.

PART I – PERMISSIBLE NOISE LEVELS

2. (1) The maximum permissible noise levels from a facility in the general environment specified in Column I of Table I of the First Schedule to which a person may be exposed shall not exceed the level specified in Column 2 of the Table for the time specified.

(2) The maximum permissible noise levels of continuous or intermittent noise from a factory or a workshop, to which a person may be exposed, shall not exceed the level specified in Column I Table II of the First Schedule, for the time specified in Columns 2 and 3 of the Table.

(3) The maximum permissible noise levels from impulsive noise to which a person may be exposed shall be as specified in Column 1 of Table III of the First Schedule for the permitted number of impulses or impacts emitted per day specified in Column 2 of the table.

(4) The maximum permissible noise level from a construction site to which a person in a facility specified in Column I of Table IV of the First Schedule may be exposed, shall not exceed the level specified in Column 2 during the time specified in the Table.

(5) The maximum permissible noise level from a public announcement system or address system or device to which a person in the Noise Control Zone specified in Column I of Table V of the First Schedule may be exposed shall not exceed the level specified in Column 2 during the time specified in the Table.

(6) The maximum permissible noise levels from a place of entertainment to which a person in the Noise Control Zone specified in Column I of Table VI of the First Schedule may be exposed shall not exceed the level specified in Column 2 during the time specified in the Table.

(7) The maximum permissible noise levels from a place or areas of worship to which a person in the noise Control Zone specified in Column I of part VII of the First Schedule may be exposed shall not exceed the level specified in Column 2 during the time specified in the Table.

(8) The maximum permissible noise level from accelerating vehicles including two stroke engines to which a person may be exposed in the category specified in Column I of Table VIII of the First Schedule shall not exceed the level specified in Column 2 of the Table.

(9) The maximum permissible noise level from a quarry or mine to which a person in the affected areas specified in Column I of Table IX of the First Schedule may be exposed shall not exceed the level specified in Column 2 of that Table.

3. Subject to these Regulations, no person shall, for any activity specified in regulation 2 of these Regulations emit noise in excess of the maximum permissible noise level authorized by a permit issued under these Regulations, unless as specified in Second Schedule.

PART II – CONTROL AND MITIGATION OF NOISE

4. The owner of machinery, or the owner or occupier of an industry or mine or any other such facility shall undertake measurements of noise levels within facility as well as within the ambient environment of the premises using noise level meters, measurement schedules and protocols

that meet the Agency's standard and such data shall be submitted periodically to the Agency at intervals to be determined by the Agency.

5. (1) No person shall emit or cause to be emitted, or permit the emission of noise resulting from any action or activity specified in sub-regulation 2 of this regulation if that noise is a disturbance to the receptor or in the neighbourhood for more than two minutes or is within the prohibited time in a residential area or Noise Control Zone as determined by the Agency in consultation with State and Local Governments.

(2) The action or activity referred in sub-regulation 1 of this regulation are –

- a) yelling, laughing, clapping, shouting, hooting, pounding, whistling and singing;
- b) selling or advertising by shouting or outcry or amplified sound;
- c) operating any equipment in connection with construction;
- d) detonating fireworks or explosive devices not used in construction;
- e) operating any auditory signaling device, including to the ringing of bells or gongs and the blowing of horns or sirens or whistles or the production reproduction or amplification of any similar sound by electronic means; and
- f) operating or playing a radio or musical instrument or any electronic device or group of connected devices incorporating one or more loudspeakers, transducers or other electro-mechanism, which is intended for the production, reproduction or amplification of sound.

(3) Notwithstanding the provision of sub-regulation (1) of this regulation, the Agency may permit the operation of an electronic of an electronic device or loudspeakers or the emission of noise for purposes of creating public awareness, demonstration, religious assembly, political debate, cinematography, and musical or other theatrical entertainment, beauty competition, handicraft show, fair, circus, private dance, party, lecture or public hearing.

(4) The provision of sub-regulation (1) of this regulation does not apply to ---

- a) noise caused by the operation of a loudspeaker or siren for fire brigade, ambulance or police purposes;
 - b) noise caused by emergency measures undertaken to safeguard health, safety or welfare of the people;
 - c) noise caused, or continuance of noise caused by a person as a result of temporary or accidental cause which could not have been prevented by the exercise of due diligence and care on the part of that person;
 - d) noise caused by the horn of a vehicle for the purpose of giving sufficient warning of the approach or position of the vehicle;
 - e) noise caused at or by an educational class or recreation in or around a school, college, university or other educational institutions;
 - f) noise caused at or by athletics or sports;
 - g) noise caused at a cultural activity or cultural show, funeral service or rite, marriage ceremony held between the hours of 10:00am and 8:00pm of the same day in any area; and
 - h) noise caused during a period, or by such a cause or for a purpose as the Agency may by notice specify.
6. (1) The Agency may, in consultation with State and Local Government authorities, and by placing conspicuous sign posts or by issue of notice in widely circulated media, designate any area as a Noise Control Zone for the purpose of controlling noise level in that area.
- (2) A notice issued under sub-regulation (1) of this regulation shall describe and delimit the area to which it applies, including the radius of the Noise Control Zone and shall define the period and time of the day during which persons are subject to control, or a particular building which is subject to control.

(3) Where the area in respect of which a Noise Control Zone notice is issued is within a specified radius of any specified building, the notice shall describe and delimit the area by reference to that area, building and radius.

PART III – PERMIT FOR NOISE EMISSIONS

IN EXCESS OF PERMISSIBLE LEVELS

7. (1) An owner or occupier of premises whose works or activities may likely emit noise in excess of the permissible levels shall apply to the Agency for a permit to emit noise in excess of the permissible levels.

(2) Procedure for application for a permit for noise emission in excess of permissible levels including revocation of such Permit when it has already been issued as specified in the national Environmental (Permitting and Licensing System) Regulations, 2009.

(3) The Agency, on receiving an application under sub-regulation (1) of this regulation, may issue the applicant with a Noise Permit, which shall allow the Permit Holder to emit noise in excess of the permissible levels on such terms and conditions as may be contained in the permit.

(4) A Noise Permit contain requirements relating to the manner in which the works or activities are to be carried out and may, in particular specify –

- a) the plant or machinery to be used;
- b) the hours during which the works or activities may be carried out;
- c) the level of noise which may be emitted in excess of the permissible noise levels;
- d) the works or activities and the method by which they are to be carried out;
- e) the steps proposed to be taken to minimize noise resulting from the works or activities;
and
- f) the duration of the Noise Permit, after which the Permit Holder would be required to apply for dateline extension.

(5) In issuing a Noise Permit, the agency shall have regard to –

- a) the need for ensuring that the best practicable means are employed to minimize noise;
 - b) the desirability of the permit;
 - c) the need to protect any person in the locality in which the premises in question are situated, from the effects of the noise; and
 - d) information from the Applicant indicating the schedule of activity plans and time line over which the facility shall be able to comply with permissible noise levels for its category of operation.
8. Where the works or activities to which the permit relates are carried out by persons other than the permit holder, it is the duty of the permit holder to take all steps to ensure that the Permit and any conditions specified in it are complied with by person carrying out the works or activities.
9. The Agency may, at any time and after giving reasonable notice to the permit holder, revoke a Noise Permit if the Agency is satisfied that the conditions of the Permit have not been complied with or that the continued emission of noise in excess of the permissible levels is leading to or could lead to significant adverse impacts to the residents in the area.

PART IV – ENFORCEMENT

10. (1) Any person may complain to the Agency in writing if such a person considers that the noise levels being emitted, or likely to be emitted, may be higher than the permissible noise levels under these Regulations or reaching disturbing proportions.
- (2) In any such complaint under sub-regulation (1) of this regulation, it is not necessary for the complainant to show or prove personal loss or injury or discomfort caused by the emission of the alleged noise.
- (3) On receiving a complaint under sub-regulation (1) of this regulation, the Agency shall after due investigation and substantiation, take all reasonable steps to ensure that the noise is abated or controlled within permissible levels under these Regulations.

11. (1) Where the Agency has reasonable cause to believe that any person is emitting or is likely to emit noise in any area in excess of the maximum permissible levels, or is causing or likely to cause annoyance, the Agency may serve an improvement notice on that person on the form prescribed in the Second Schedule to these Regulations ordering all or any of the following –

- a) the stopping of the noise or prevention or discontinuance of any annoyance, or prohibiting or restricting its occurrence or re-occurrence;
- b) compliance with the permissible noise levels;
- c) the reduction of the level of noise emanating from the premises or facility to a level as may be specified in the notice;
- d) the carrying out of a noise audit;
- e) the taking of measures to prevent, discontinue or stop the excessive emission of the noise;
- f) the prevention of any subsequent increase in the level of noise emanating from the premises or area;
- g) the issuance of such directions intended to contribute to the reduction of emission of excessive noise from or within the vicinity of a specified area;
- h) the execution of such works, and the taking of such steps, as may be specified in the notice;
or
- i) any other measure as may be necessary.

(2) Notwithstanding the provisions of these Regulations, the Agency may, where it appears to it that the level of noise emanating from any premises or area is not acceptable or is causing a public nuisance, issue an improvement notice, for the benefit of the public;

(3) An improvement notice issued under sub-regulation (1) or (2) of this regulation shall specify the period within which the requirements of the notice are to be complied with.

(4) The improvement notice shall be served on the person responsible or alleged to have caused or likely to cause the noise pollution or annoyance if the noise or annoyance has not yet occurred.

(5) A person on whom an improvement notice is served under this regulation shall be entitled to prove that such perceived excessive noise does not emanate from the person's facility or premises and in the absence of such proof, that the person shall be bound to carry out the requirements in the improvement notice.

12. (1) The Agency may seize, impound, confiscate or prohibit the use of any property, tool, machinery or other instrument which is likely to, or has caused the emission of excessive noise, if, in the Agency's opinion the sanction would restore the permissible noise level in the area.

(2) The Agency may –

- a) order the removal from source of the noise; or
- b) render inoperable by the removal of any part from; or
- c) lock or seal or close so as to make unusable, any instrument, appliance, vehicle, or machine that is producing or contributing to the excessive noise.

(3) the owner of any item seized, impounded or confiscated under these Regulations shall be responsible for the cost incurred.

13. (1) Where any property, tool, machinery or other instrument has been seized or impounded or confiscated or placed under sanctions under regulation 12 of these Regulations, the owner or occupier or person using that property, tool, machinery or other instrument may, at any time, apply to the Agency for the property, tool, machinery or other instrument to be returned to the person.

(2) On receipt of an application under sub-regulation (1) of this regulation, the Agency may return or remove sanctions placed on the property, tool, machinery or other instrument or part of it, upon being satisfied that its return or removal of sanctions is not likely to lead to the resumption of the emission of excessive noise, or on terms and conditions as may be directed by the Agency as the case may be.

(3) Nothing in these Regulations prevents the Agency from returning the property, tool, machinery or other instrument to which these Regulation applies without being requested to do so, if the Agency is so convinced that the situation that created such a need no longer subsists.

14. (1) The Agency may, in consultation with other relevant organizations, issue guidelines requiring the use of any plant or machinery or devices or arrangements for purposes of reducing excessive noise.

(2) The Guidelines issued under sub-regulation (1) of this regulation may apply to other standard specifications, description or measurement schedules and protocols approved by the Agency.

15. For the purpose of giving guidance on appropriate methods, including the use of specified types of plant or machinery for minimizing noise, the Agency shall –

- a) issue or recommend codes of practice as, in the Agency's opinion, are suitable; and
- b) approve codes of practice issued by other relevant bodies which in the opinion of the Agency, are suitable.

PART V – GENERAL

16. The Agency and its agents shall not be held liable for any act or omission that may arise in the course of enforcing these Regulations.

17. (1) Any person who –

- a) Contravenes the provisions of regulations 3 and 5 of these Regulations;
- b) Fails to comply with a notice issued under regulation 6 of these Regulations;
- c) Contravenes or fails to carry out any requirement of an improvement notice under regulation 11 of these Regulations;
- d) Fails, neglects or refuses to control excessive noise in accordance with these Regulations;
- e) Fails to immediately reduce excessive noise to a permissible level when required to do so;

- f) Causes or contributes to the emission of noise in excess of the maximum permissible levels from or within the vicinity of the premises during a prohibited period;
- g) Fails, without lawful justification, to comply with any term or condition of a noise permit or order issued under these Regulations;
- h) Makes a statement, or produces a document, that is false or misleading in a material particular; or
- i) Obstructs the Agency or its authorized agents in the execution of their duties to ensure enforcement of these Regulations.
- j) Carries out works or activities, or permit works or activities to be carried out without due authority, permit or necessary permit.
- k) Or contravenes any requirements or condition of a permit;

Commits an offence and shall be liable to a fine of N5,000:00 for everyday the offence subsists and on conviction be liable to a fine not exceeding N50,000:00 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year or to both.

(2) Where an offence under sub-regulation (1)(a) – (i) of this regulation is committed by a body corporate, it shall on conviction be liable to a fine not exceeding N500,000:00 and an additional fine of N10,000:00 for everyday the offence subsists.

18. In these Regulations, unless the context otherwise requires –

“Act” means the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (Establishment) Act, 2007;

“Agency” means the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency establishment under section 1 of the Act;

“annoyance” means a feeling of displeasure evoked by noise, or any feeling of resentment, discomfort or irritation occurring when noise intrudes into another person’s thoughts or mood, or interferes with any activity being done by the affected person;

“A-weighting” means a frequency dependent correction that is applied to a measured or calculated sound of moderate intensity to mimic the varying sensitivity of the ear to sound for different frequencies.

“Council” means governing council of the Agency established under section 3 of National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency Act 2007.

“Court” means a court of competent jurisdiction;

“Construction” includes erection, alteration, repair, dismantling, demolition, structural maintenance, painting, mowing, land-clearing, earth-moving, grading, excavating, laying of pipes and conduits whether above or below ground level, street and highway building, concreting, installation and alteration of equipment, and the structural installation of construction components and materials in any form or for any purpose that includes any work in connection with the construction.

“Code of Practice” means a publication prepared or adopted and approved by the Agency which contains the guidelines under which specific tasks or set of processes or actions must be performed in order to meet the quality assurance, quality control, and professional practice and be acceptable as basic in performing and approving performed tasks relevant to these Regulations.

“C-weighting” means a frequency dependent correction that is applied to a measured or calculated sound of high intensity to mimic the varying sensitivity of the ear to sound for different frequencies.

“dB (A) L_{max}” means maximum level of A-weighted individual noise event;

“dB (A) L_{eq}” means average equivalent A-weighted continuous sound energy over a period;

“dB (C)” means C-weighted sound pressure reading especially for peak noise level;

“dBA” means the unit in decibels on the A-weighted scale;

“decibels” means a dimensionless unit used in comparison of the magnitude of sound pressures, intensities or powers;

“disturbance” means any act or instance of interrupting rest, calm, attention or quiet of another person;

“Director General” means the director General/Chief Executive Officer of the Agency;

“facility” means any machinery, instrument, industry, mines and all other tools capable of generating noise;

“impact” means the effect of noise;

“improvement notice” means a notice issued under regulation 11;

“impulsive noise” means a noise consisting of one or more bursts of sound energy of a duration of less than one second;

“intermittent noise” means a noise whose level suddenly drops to several times the level of the background noise;

“loud speaker” means any electro-magnetic or electrical or mechanical device capable of converting electrical signals or energy into sound, and includes an amplifier, microphone, gramophone or similar instrument;

“musical instrument” means any article or thing adapted for use in making or reproducing musical sound and includes a radio receiver, television receiver, drum, keyboard, wind instrument, guitar, steel piano, cassette or compact disk player;

“microphone” means a transducer that converts an acoustic disturbance into an electrical output signal that is proportional to the acoustic disturbance;

“noise” means any unwanted and annoying sound that is intrinsically objectionable to human beings or which can have or is likely to have an adverse effect on human health or the environment;

“Noise Control Zone” means geographical areas so designated, which under no conditions noise levels should exceed that which the agency designates for such zones including hospitals, schools, designated residential areas and other institutions that the Agency may consider as requiring special considerations for noise control.

“noise Pollution” means the same as “excessive noise” in these Regulations;

“occupier” in relation to any premises or facility, includes a tenant, agent, manager, foreman or other person acting or apparently acting in the general management or control of the premises or of any plant or facility or machinery;

“permissible noise level” means the levels of noise prescribed by these Regulations;

“Permit” means approval granted by the Agency to exceed permissible noise levels under these Regulations;

“Permit holder” means a person issued a Permit under these Regulations;

“person” means natural or artificial person;

“person responsible” in relation to the emission of noise, means any individual or corporate organization to whose act, default or sufferance, the noise is attributable;

“place of entertainment” means any building or other place where activities of amusement entertaining playing of music, dancing, performing or shows take place;

“point of reception” means any point on any premises where sound or vibration originating from other premises or areas is received;

“sound” means a fluctuation in pressure that can be detected by the human ear;

“vehicle” includes a machine or implement of any kind drawn or propelled whether by animal, mechanical, electrical or other motive power.

19. These Regulations may be cited as the National Environmental (Noise Standards and Control) Regulations 2009.

SCHEDULES

FIRST SCHEDULE

MAXIMUM PERMISSIBLE NOISE LEVELS

TABLE 1

Regulation 2(1)

MAXIMUM PERMISSIBLE NOISE LEVELS FOR GENERAL ENVIRONMENT

	Column 1	Column 2	
	FACILITY	Maximum Permissible NOISE LIMITS dB (A) (Leq)	
		DAY	NIGHT
A	Any building used as hospital, convalescence home, home for the aged, sanatorium and institutes of higher learning, conference rooms, public library, environmental or recreational sites.	45	35
B	Residential buildings	50	35
C	Mixed residential (with some commercial and entertainment)	55	45
D	Residential + industry or small scale production + commerce	60	50
E	Industrial (outside perimeter fence)	70	60

Above noise levels are weighted average in the facility over the hours defined for night and day below.

Time Frame: use duration

Day - 6:00am – 10:00pm

Night - 10:00pm – 6:00am

The time frame takes into consideration human activity.

TABLE II

Regulation 2(2)

Maximum Permissible Noise Levels (Continuous or intermittent noise) from a factory or workshop

COLUMN 1	COLUMN 2	COLUMN 3
Leq dB (A)	Duration (Daily)	Duration (Weekly)
85	8 Hours	40 Hours
88	4 Hours	20 Hours
91	2 Hours	10 Hours
94	1 Hour	5 Hours
97	30 minutes	2.5 Hours
100	15 minutes	1.25 Hours
106	7.5 minutes	37.5 minutes
109	1.875 minutes	9.375 minutes

Noise Levels shall not exceed a Leq of:

- i) Factory/Workshops 85 dB (A).
- ii) Offices 50 dB (A)
- iii) Factory/Workshop Compound 75 dB (A)

TABLE III

Regulation 2(3)

The maximum permissible noise levels from impulsive noise

COLUMN 1	COLUMN 2
Sound Level dB (A) (Lmax)	Permitted number of Impulses or Impact per day
140	100
130	1,000
120	10,000

TABLE IV

Regulation 2(4)

Maximum Permissible Noise Levels from Construction Site

COLUMN 1	COLUMN 2	
Facility	Maximum Noise level permitted (Leq) in dB (A)	
	DAY	NIGHT
Hospitals, schools, institutions of higher learning, homes for the disabled, etc.	60	50
Buildings other than those prescribed above	75	65

Note: Measurements to be made at the receptor sites.

TABLE V

Regulation 2(5)

Maximum Permissible Noise Levels for Public Announcement System or Device

COLUMN 1	COLUMN 2	
Noise Control Zone	Sound Level dB (A) (Leq) Day	Sound Level dB (A) (Leq) Night
Residential	60	40
Commercial	75	50
Industrial	85	65

Time Frame: Use duration

Day - 6:00am – 10:00pm

Night - 10:00pm – 6:00am

The time frame takes into consideration human activity.

TABLE VI

Regulation 2(6)

Maximum Permissible Noise Levels for Places of Entertainment

COLUMN 1	COLUMN 2	
Noise Control Zone	Sound Level dB (A) (Leq) Day	Sound Level dB (A) (Leq) Night
Residential	60	40
Commercial	75	50
Industrial	85	65

Time Frame: Use duration

Day - 6:00am – 10:00pm

Night - 10:00pm – 6:00am

The time frame takes into consideration human activity.

TABLE VII

Regulation 2(7)

Maximum Permissible Noise Levels for Places or Areas of Worship

COLUMN 1	COLUMN 2	
Noise Control Zone	Sound Level dB (A) (Leq) Day	Sound Level dB (A) (Leq) Night
Residential	60	40
Commercial	75	50
Industrial	85	65

Time Frame: Use duration

Day - 6:00am – 10:00pm

Night - 10:00pm – 6:00am

The time frame takes into consideration human activity.

TABLE VIII

Regulation 2(8)

Maximum Permissible Noise Levels for Accelerating Vehicles

COLUMN 1	COLUMN 2
Vehicle Category	Maximum Sound Level in dB(A)
1. Vehicles intended for carriage of passengers and equipped with not more than nine seats including the driver's seat	78
2. Vehicles intended for carriage of passengers and equipped with not more than nine seats, including the driver's seat and having maximum permissible mass of more than 3.5 tones. a) With an engine power of more than 150kW b) With an engine power of less than	80

150kW	83
3. Vehicles intended for carriage of passengers and equipped with more than nine seats including the driver's seat and vehicles intended for carriage of goods:	
a) With a maximum permissible mass not exceeding 2 tonnes	79
b) With a maximum permissible mass exceeding 2 tonnes but not exceeding 3.5tonnes.	80
4. Vehicles intended for the carriage of goods and having a maximum permissible mass exceeding 3.5tonnes	
a) With engine power of less than 75kW	81
b) With an engine power of less than 75kW but less than 150kW	83
c) With engine power of not less than 150kW	84

TABLE IX

Regulation 2(9)

Maximum Permissible Noise Levels from Mines and Quarries

Column 1	Column 2
Facility Affected Areas	Limited Value in dB (C)
1. For any building used as a hospital, school, convalescent home, old age home or residential buildings.	109dB (c)
2. For any building in an area used for residential and one or more of the following purposes: Commerce, small scale production, entertainment, or any residential apartment in an areas that is used for purposes of industry, commerce or small-scale production, or any building used for the purpose of industry,	114dB(c)

commerce or small-scale production.	
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NB: Standard assumes minimum receptor distance of 500 metres from the mine

SECOND SCHEDULE

Regulation 11

IMPROVEMENT NOTICE

(Issued under section 22 of the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (Establishment) Act 25, 2007

FORM NESREA/A/NC/...

To: _____

Take Notice that on the _____ of _____ 20__ authorized Agent(s) from the Agency carried out an inspection of your establishment or facility or located in _____ Village _____ Local Government of _____ State where it was found that you or your agents were generating or producing noise in excess of the permissible noise levels or in contravention of these Regulations.

The Agency particularly found the following :

1. _____
2. _____
- 3.
- 4.

(Attach more paper if necessary)

You are hereby ordered to stop or minimize or discontinue all activities that are causing or likely to generate the production o noise and reduce the noise levels to the permissible noise levels in the above mentioned facility or establishment within a period of _____ days from the date of this Notice. You are also required to restore the tranquility of the surroundings.

You are notified that in accordance with Section 22 of the NESREA Act, failure to comply with this Notice shall result in criminal prosecution being instituted against you or your agent or both.

Director-General

NESREA

Copy: Honourable Minister,
Ministry of Environment,

Dated at Abuja this 30th day of September, 2009

Mr John Odey,
Honourable Minister
Minister of Environment