

SAN DIEGO COUNTY REGIONAL AIRPORT AUTHORITY

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9th Variance Process for San Diego International Airport

What is the “Variance” process for airports in California?

Generally, all California airports with aircraft noise impacts in surrounding communities of 65 decibels (dB) or greater Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL) must receive a variance to certain sections of CA PUC Title 21, the California Noise Standards, (CNS) as adopted by the State of California, Division of Aeronautics (Caltrans). The CNS uses a 65 dB CNEL contour to define the noise impact area around an airport. It is the ultimate objective of the State that there be no incompatible land uses (i.e. residential, schools, churches or hospitals) located within an airport’s noise impact area. Since the late 1970s, the San Diego Unified Port District owned and operated SDIA, receiving eight variances to the CNS to allow it to continue operation. Creation of the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority (SDCRAA) in 2003 resulted in the transfer of the variance process to SDCRAA.

What noise mitigation programs have resulted from the Variance Process?

The CNS are designed to bring the airport proprietor and the local noise-impacted community together to work co-operatively to diminish aircraft-related noise impacts. Some SDIA programs resulting from this process include the Airport Use Regulations, Time-of-Day restrictions (nightly departure noise curfew) and the School and Residential Sound Attenuation (sound insulation) Programs. Additionally, a major modernization of SDIA’s computerized noise monitoring system was completed to more precisely monitor the aircraft noise contour.

What is the status of the current San Diego International Airport (“SDIA”) Variance?

The SDCRAA, owner and operator of SDIA since January 1, 2003, applied to the State for further variance (Variance #9) on June 24, 2004. All interested parties (interveners) within SDIA’s noise impact area, including planning boards, community groups and SDCRAA’s Airport Noise Advisory Committee (ANAC) were provided copies of the variance application and had the opportunity to comment on the application to the State. The 8th (current) Variance remains in effect until the State determines the merits of SDCRAA’s 9th variance application.

SDCRAA undertook negotiations with several interveners in the process, arriving at a stipulated agreement with one. However, an agreement could not be reached with a second intervener, so a trial was held before an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) on September 18, 2007. The judge’s verdict was forwarded to Caltrans in April 2008. Caltrans has 100 days to publish a final decision.



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