

Guidelines on Application of Construction Noise Permit for using Modular Integrated Construction (MiC) Method

Introduction

Modular Integrated Construction (MiC) refers to construction whereby free-standing integrated modules (completed with finishes, fixtures, and fittings) are manufactured in a prefabrication factory and then transported to a site for building assembly. While building work can be carried out in daytime of normal weekdays in general, the modules which are comparatively large and may need to be transported to and installed at a construction site in restricted hours¹ under the Noise Control Ordinance (NCO), and hence a valid Construction Noise Permit (CNP) issued by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) would be needed. In view of ever wider use of MiC method in Hong Kong, this paper provides guidance for developers, architects and contractors on the necessary justification when considering applying for an essential Construction Noise Permit (CNP) for MiC.

The CNP system

2. The mandate of the NCO is to protect the environment particularly at the sensitive hours. The NCO was developed, after balancing all interests, to leave general construction work largely with no restriction between 0700 and 1900 hours on a non-holiday from Monday to Saturday (i.e. normal weekdays). For general construction work at any other time (i.e. the restricted hours), a CNP has to be applied from the Authority except for emergency cases whereby having no construction to be carried out immediately will incur life injury, property damage or serious disruption to public transport system. In simple words, the CNP system with technical memoranda in place is to guard against any unnecessary construction in an uncontrolled manner which may cause noise disturbance to nearby residents.

Consideration of CNP for MiC construction works

3. It is in the interest of the project proponents or the contractors to be aware of the following before making an application for a CNP.

MiC during daytime on weekdays in priority

- At a building construction site, construction work generally can be carried out during the daytime on normal weekdays. The project proponent or the contractor should plan for MiC to minimize works within the restricted hours¹, for example, better design of modules in terms of sizes and shapes to allow transportation in daytime, as noisy construction activities would affect the nearby residents in particular within the restricted hours. In

¹ Restricted hours: between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. or at any time on a general holiday (including Sunday)

some situations, other nuisance from the construction activities such as light, air, and traffic may also cause vigorous response from the public if the site is situated too close to the nearby residential dwellings, which may be in turn causing unexpected delay in the construction work. Therefore, carrying out of construction work including transportation of MiC modules during daytime should be accorded priority.

Construction method meeting noise limits

- Developers, architects, and contractors should note the acceptable noise levels (ANLs) stipulated in the Technical Memorandum (TM) on Noise from Construction Work other than Percussive Piling, and also in the Technical Memorandum on Noise from Construction Work in Designated Areas. The construction work with use of quiet construction equipment, methods, and other noise mitigation measures should be designed and planned well before the tender stage for the construction work such that the ANLs would be complied with, and the prescribed construction work would be avoided. Relevant web links to the TM are provided below for easy reference:
 - https://www.epd.gov.hk/epd/english/environmentinhk/noise/guide_ref/tm_nonpp.html
 - https://www.epd.gov.hk/epd/english/environmentinhk/noise/guide_ref/tm_des_area.html

Unavoidable Constraints

- It should NOT be assumed at the planning stage that a CNP would be issued for transporting large MiC modules. Sound justification for unavoidable constraints, in such cases the genuine traffic restrictions on transporting large modules during daytime given by the Police or the Transport Department in writing; information in the form of a noise management plan on adoption of the quietest practicable working method, minimum number of powered mechanical equipment (PME), quieter equipment (e.g. PME with Quality PME Label), and other practicable noise mitigation measures should be provided by the applicant in the CNP application with unavoidable constraints. If a CNP is issued, these proposals of measures would be imposed as permit conditions.
- The CNP is applicable to only the specific construction activities concerned (e.g. transportation and unloading of the MiC modules within the site) will be time limited.
- The contractor may be required to, soon upon the commencement of construction, notify the Authority indicating the construction involved and the noise mitigation measures taken for the carrying out of works during the restricted hours.

Noise Management Plan

- To facilitate the application and efficient processing for the CNP, the applicant should submit the application with a noise management plan as mentioned above. Nonetheless, the Authority may impose additional permit conditions on noise mitigation as appropriate. Quieter construction equipment and methods presented at EPD's website should be considered and would help clarify those situations where the use of quiet equipment and measures, for example quieter mobile crane and generator, and use of noise barrier would be mandatory.

Liaison with nearby estate management/owners incorporation

- The contractor will be strongly recommended to liaise with the estate management/owners' corporation by issuing notice prior to the commencement of the construction explaining the advantages of MiC, the need for carrying out MiC within the restricted hours, and providing a public complaint hotline/enquiry number.

Subsequent review

4. The Authority may review the above guidance and check the need for any procedural change, and abuse of the CNP system. Updated arrangement will then be uploaded onto the EPD website for general reference of the public, contractors as well as estate management/owners incorporation.

Contact of Regional Offices

5. For further information with respect to the CNP for works using MiC method, please contact the concerned Regional Offices.

Offices	Office Addresses	Tel.	Control Districts
Regional Office (East)	8/F., Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices, 303 Cheung Sha Wan Road, Kowloon.	2402 5200	Kwun Tong, Wong Tai Sin, Sai Kung, Kowloon City & Yau Tsim Mong
Regional Office (South)	2/F., Chinachem Exchange Square, 1 Hoi Wan Street, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong.	2516 1718	Hong Kong Island & Islands

Regional Office (West)	8/F., Tsuen Wan Government Office, 38 Sai Lau Kok Road, Tsuen Wan, New Territories.	2417 6116	Tuen Mun, Tsuen Wan, Kwai Tsing & Sham Shui Po
Regional Office (North)	10/F., Shatin Government Offices, No.1 Sheung Wo Che Road, Shatin, New Territories.	2158 5757	Yuen Long, Shatin, Tai Po & North.

6. In addition to the contact with our Regional Offices, the contractor may also wish to submit the application for CNP online at:

<https://epic.epd.gov.hk/eForm/pages/datadownload/downloadMain.jsp> or

<https://www.ecnp.hk/>

Noise Management and Control Section
Regional East Office
Environmental Protection Department
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