



*EMA*  
environmental  
management  
authority



# State of the Environment 2003







# Mission Statement

The Environmental Management Authority is committed to protecting and conserving the natural environment to enhance the quality of life by promoting:

- *Environmentally responsible behaviour*
- *Development and enforcement of environmental legislation*
- *Encouragement of voluntary compliance*
- *The use of economic and other incentives*

This is to be achieved in an atmosphere of mutual respect, professionalism, accountability, transparency, collaboration and social responsibility.



# Chairman's Message



The EMA's 2003 Annual Report continues a tradition of periodic detailed review of the state of aspects of the environment requiring special attention. Due to the very large and rapidly increasing number of public complaints about noise, the EMA has selected the management of noise for special attention. In the Noise Pollution Control Rules, 2001, Parliament gave the EMA new duties to control ambient noise levels. The 2003 State of the Environment Report is the first attempt to reflect on the experience so far in implementing the new legislation.

EMA has found that although noise may not be top of everyone's priorities, it is certainly a big issue for many with 755 complaints being received in the period 2001-2003. Most of these complaints were from areas along the east west corridor such as Diego Martin, Port of Spain, San Juan and Arima, as well as along the west coast especially Chaguanas, Couva and San Fernando. The largest single category of complaints (52%) was about loud music. The EMA has developed a code of good practice with regard to noise control for the entertainment industry. Anyone holding a party or similar entertainment event is required to follow the guidelines in the code of good practice. Even so, during 2002 and 2003 legal action against noise polluters was taken on 70 occasions where attempts at eliciting voluntary compliance failed.

It is clear from members of the public that they fully support these attempts at noise control by the EMA but a lot more still needs to be done. A welcome development would be for the Police Service to start using its powers to confiscate music systems or other equipment if they cause real nuisance to others. In most countries, local police officers are usually the first line of defence against excessively noisy neighbours, with noise specialists from environmental and public health agencies being only used as a back up. Clearly, the regular Police Service will have other pressing priorities for some time to come and as a result, a more viable strategy in the short term might be to expand the number of specialist environmental police and locate them in different parts of Trinidad and Tobago.

The whole issue of controlling noise in Trinidad and Tobago is difficult business since people's reactions to noise can vary widely. One person's music can be another's intense irritation. Difficult balances have to be struck. Children who are learning, older people, or those with an illness may be most vulnerable. The EMA is attempting to balance the competing interest of various groups (e.g. religious organisations, fete promoters, residential neighbourhoods, steelband yards and industry) many of whom will never be satisfied. However, this should not be seen as a 'killjoy' strategy. Sound is an important part of communication, culture and many other parts of everyday life, but one person's important business may disturb another's concentration or sleep. We appeal to citizens to join with us in the spirit of compromise and make Trinidad and Tobago a better place for all our people.



Dr. John Agard  
Chairman





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