

Turn it down!

Or pay up to \$1,000 fine

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GULFPORT - Motorists who enjoy cranking up the volume of their music soon will have to pay if they play it too loud.

Gulfport Police Chief Alan Weatherford on Tuesday announced a campaign to raise public awareness of the city's noise ordinance, which sets a penalty of up to \$1,000 for disturbing the peace of others.

The campaign slogan is "Turn it down or pay up. Your music. Your money." Residents and visitors can see the slogan around the city on billboards and road signs, on decals at gas station fuel pumps and on countertop displays at convenience stores.

Loud music is a quality-of-life issue and a safety issue, said Weatherford.

"This isn't about writing tickets. One of the top complaints I receive from the citizens of Gulfport in our weekly neighborhood meetings is regarding loud music coming from vehicles."

"Loud music is not only a nuisance to the community," Weatherford said, "but it's also a safety issue. Loud music impairs your ability to hear emergency signals on the road. It impairs your ability to hear a train approaching or another vehicle blowing its horn as a warning."

Electronic roadside signs have been up on city streets for several weeks.

Weatherford said numerous residents have complained of being awakened at all hours of the night, and the acoustics in FEMA trailers make it especially bothersome.

"The only complaint I've had against the loud-noise campaign came from a man who said that since we've been through the nation's worst natural disaster, police have better things to do. I'm sorry, but protecting the quality of life is part of what we do. We're trying to educate noise violators to respect others."

Other cities around the nation also have loud-music laws, said Weatherford, noting Chicago police can tow or seize a vehicle for loud music.

Weatherford said the public can file a noise-violation complaint online at www.gulfportpolice.net. A click on the "turn it down or pay up" logo takes you to a screen that asks for the date, time and location, and the license plate number, vehicle description and driver description.

Vehicle owners identified by an online complaint will receive a warning letter.

The Internet complaint form could be a handy tool for parents who aren't aware their teenager is driving around, blowing out the speakers, Weatherford said.

To report loud music

The Gulfport Police Department's Web site has a complaint form for drivers who play loud music. What you need to know:

- **Web site:** www.gulfportpolice.net.
- **Details:** Give the date, time, location and the license plate number, vehicle description and driver description.

- **Penalty:** A fine of up to \$1,000.

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