



**Committee:** T&E

**Committee Review:** At a future date

**Staff:** Ludeen McCartney-Green, Legislative Attorney

**Purpose:** To introduce agenda item – no vote expected

**Keywords:** #LeafBlowers #NoiseControl

AGENDA ITEM #1D

June 17, 2025

**Introduction**

## SUBJECT

Expedited Bill 19-25, Noise Control – Leaf Removal Equipment – Seasonal Exemption

Lead Sponsor: Councilmember Albornoz

Co-sponsors: Councilmembers Luedtke, Balcombe, and Katz

## EXPECTED ATTENDEES

None

## COUNCIL DECISION POINTS & COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

- N/A; Introduction

## DESCRIPTION/ISSUE

- Expedited Bill 19-25 would:
  - (1) provide an exemption for landscape professionals to use gas-powered leafblower equipment during certain months of the year;
  - (2) set a sunset date for the seasonal exemption; and
  - (3) generally amend the law regarding noise control.

## SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- N/A

### This report contains:

Staff Report

Expedited Bill 19-25

Pages 1-3

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**MEMORANDUM**

June 12, 2025

TO: County Council

FROM: Ludeen McCartney-Green, Legislative Attorney

SUBJECT: Expedited Bill 19-25, Noise Control – Leaf Removal Equipment – Seasonal Exemption

PURPOSE: Introduction – no Council votes required

Expedited Bill 19-25, Noise Control – Leaf Removal Equipment – Seasonal Exemption sponsored by the Lead Sponsor Councilmember Alborno and Co-sponsors Councilmembers Luedtke, Balcombe, and Katz is scheduled to be introduced on June 17, 2025. A public hearing is tentatively scheduled for July 15 at 1:30 p.m.<sup>1</sup>

Expedited Bill 19-25 would:

- (1) provide an exemption for landscape professionals to use gas-powered leafblower equipment during certain months of the year;
- (2) set a sunset date for the seasonal exemption; and
- (3) generally amend the law regarding noise control.

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of Expedited Bill 19-25 is to provide a seasonal exemption for professional landscaping companies on the ban of gas-powered leaf blower equipment, set to take effect on July 1, 2025. Commercial landscapers argue that the ban will significantly harm the industry. Some concerns raised by landscapers include: (1) the lack of battery-powered equipment on the market with comparable power and runtime as gas-powered equipment; (2) the high cost of transitioning to electric blowers, including batteries, chargers, and possibly generators; (3) increased emissions and noise from gas- or diesel-powered generators needed to charge batteries; and (4) higher costs for customers and potential workforce reductions.

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<sup>1</sup> #noisecontrol#leafblower#seasonalexemption

## BACKGROUND

The Council passed Bill 18-22, Noise Control – Leaf Removal Equipment – Amendments, back in September 2021, which implemented a ban on the sale (effective June 1, 2024) and a complete ban on the use of gas-powered leaf blowers (goes into effect on July 1, 2025).<sup>2</sup> The ban was implemented due to significant noise complaints from County residents regarding the use of gas-powered leaf blowers, as the noise can easily travel through windows and doors, which impacts a person's ability to enjoy their home. In addition, the ban provided co-benefits linked to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, increased clean air, and further supported the County's Climate Action Plan.

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) discussed its challenges with enforcing environmental noise because leaf blowers no longer have original manufacturer labels that indicate the level of decibels.<sup>3</sup> Research showed that beyond being distracting, the noise could have adverse health effects, both auditory (such as hearing loss and tinnitus), systemic vascular disease, and mental illness.<sup>4</sup>

A 2015 EPA study estimates that there are 11 million leaf blowers in the United States.<sup>5</sup> Using this nationwide information and extrapolating using County population estimates, there could be more than 35,000 leaf blowers in Montgomery County. Montgomery County is also home to one of the largest landscaping companies in the region, Ruppert Landscape, which employs nearly 2,000 employees.<sup>6</sup>

### *Jurisdictions with a seasonal ban*

In the cities of Winnetka, Illinois, and Morristown, New Jersey, the use of gas-powered lawn equipment is restricted with a seasonal ban. In Winnetka, gas-powered leaf blower use is prohibited in April, October, and November<sup>7</sup>. In Morristown, it allows for the use of a gas-powered leaf blower from October through December each year.

## BILL SPECIFICS

Expedited Bill 19-25 would provide a seasonal exemption for landscaping companies that own or operate a business in the County that provides services such as lawn care, tree care, or horticultural services for residential homes or commercial properties.

The seasonal exemption allows the use of combustion-powered leaf blower equipment by a professional landscaping company for 3 months during the fall, starting October 1 until December 31, limiting use only during the weekdays between the hours of 8 am – 8 pm. This

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<sup>2</sup> The Montgomery County Code Section 31B-9(f) does not currently reflect the codified language adopted by the Council under Bill 18-22. The enacted language for subsection (f) will appear in the Code after the effective date, July 1, 2025.

<sup>3</sup> Montgomery County Council, Introduction of Bill 18-22 (June 28, 2022), [Montgomery County Council - Legislative Information Management System – bill details](#).

<sup>4</sup> Id. at Page 3.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-09/documents/banks.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.lawnandlandscape.com/page/top-100/>

<sup>7</sup> Section 9.16.021 of Winnetka Village Code Ordinance No. MC-06-2023

exemption does not extend to weekends to ensure County residents are not disturbed while at home.

Lastly, the bill would sunset the seasonal exemption, and it would no longer be effective 3 years after the bill becomes law.

This packet contains:

Expedited Bill 19-25

Circle #

1

Expedited Bill No. 19-25  
Concerning: Noise Control – Leaf  
Removal Equipment – Seasonal  
Exemption  
Revised: 6/10/2025 Draft No. 2  
Introduced: June 17, 2025  
Expires: December 7, 2026  
Enacted: \_\_\_\_\_  
Executive: \_\_\_\_\_  
Effective: \_\_\_\_\_  
Sunset Date: 3 years after the effective  
date  
Ch. [#], Laws of Mont. Co. [year]

## COUNTY COUNCIL FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

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Lead Sponsor: Councilmember Alborno  
Cosponsors: Councilmembers Luedtke, Balcombe, and Katz

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### AN EXPEDITED ACT to:

- (1) provide an exemption for landscape professionals to use gas-powered leafblower equipment during certain months of the year;
- (2) set a sunset date for the seasonal exemption; and
- (3) generally, amend the law regarding noise control.

By amending

Montgomery County Code  
Chapter 31B, Noise Control  
Sections 31B-2, 31B-9, and 31B-10

<b>Boldface</b>	<i>Heading or defined term.</i>
<u>Underlining</u>	<i>Added to existing law by original bill.</i>
[Single boldface brackets]	<i>Deleted from existing law by original bill.</i>
<u>Double underlining</u>	<i>Added by amendment.</i>
[[Double boldface brackets]]	<i>Deleted from existing law or the bill by amendment.</i>
* * *	<i>Existing law unaffected by bill.</i>

*The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following Act:*

**Sec. 1. Sections 31B-2, 31B-9, 31B-10 are amended as follows:**

**31B-2. Definitions.**

In this Chapter, the following words and phrases have the following meanings:

\* \* \*

*Leafblower* means any portable device designed or intended to blow, vacuum, or move leaves or any other type of unattached debris or material by generating a concentrated stream of air. Leafblower includes devices or machines that accept vacuum attachments.

\* \* \*

*Person* means an individual, group of individuals, corporation, firm, partnership, or voluntary association; or a department, bureau, agency, or instrument of the County or any municipality, or of any other government to the extent allowed by law.

*Professional landscaping company* means an individual or group of individuals who own or operate a company in the County that:

(1) provides lawn care;

(2) tree care; or

(3) horticultural services for residential homes or commercial properties.

**31B-9. Leaf removal equipment.**

\* \* \*

(e) *Sale of combustion leaf removal equipment – prohibited.* A person must not sell or offer for sale a combustion engine-powered handheld, backpack, or walk-behind leaf blower or leaf vacuum.

(f) *Use of combustion leaf removal equipment – prohibited.* Except as provided in Section 31B-10, [A] a person must not use a combustion

engine-powered handheld, backpack, or walk-behind leaf blower or leaf vacuum.

**31B-10. Exemptions.**

\* \* \*

(d) Seasonal exemption - use of combustion leaf removal equipment. A professional landscaping company is exempt from the prohibition under Section 31B-9(f) during the following days of each year: October 1 to December 31, Monday through Friday, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.

**Sec. 2. Expedited Effective Date.** The Council declares that this legislation is necessary for the immediate protection of the public interest. This Act takes effect on the date on which it becomes law.

**Sec. 3. Sunset.** This Act must sunset and have no further force and effect 3 years after this Act becomes law.