

AQI Forecasts Can Help You Protect Yourself

- You're exposed to pollution any time you breathe polluted air. But when you exercise, do yard work or other strenuous activities that increase your breathing rate, you take more pollution into your lungs.
- You can reduce your exposure by using AQI forecasts to help you plan your day. When the forecast calls for elevated levels of pollution – and especially if you are in a sensitive group – help protect your health by reducing your exposure.
- Take it a little easier. Reschedule strenuous activities for times when air quality is predicted to be better. It's a small change that can help you protect your lungs and heart.

Where Can You Find Your Local AQI Forecast?

- Many local television stations, radio stations and newspapers carry local AQI forecasts, and USA Today and the Weather Channel carry forecasts for many major U.S. cities.
- You also can find your local forecast by logging on to EPA's AIRNow web site at www.epa.gov/airnow.

Groups sensitive to the effects of air pollution:

Particle Pollution

People with heart or lung disease (such as asthma), older adults, and children

Ground-level Ozone

People with lung disease (such as asthma), active adults and children



AIR QUALITY INDEX

Your forecast to breathe by

Facts About The Expanded AQI Forecasts

For more real-time information on air quality visit:

www.epa.gov/airnow





As Important As Checking The Weather

- You probably check the weather forecast every day. After all, it's a useful tool that helps you plan what to wear and lets you know if you need to carry an umbrella.
- But there's another forecast out there you should be checking, too. This forecast, known as the Air Quality Index (AQI) forecast, can help you plan your activities to protect your health.
- In less than a minute each day, this important tool lets you know:
 - what today's air pollution levels will be in your community;
 - who's at risk from that pollution; and
 - simple steps you can take to protect yourself.
- You may have seen AQI forecasts for ozone. In nearly 300 cities across the country, state and local air pollution agencies issue these forecasts during the summer, when ozone can be a problem.
- Ozone aggravates asthma and other respiratory diseases, and can make it difficult for you to breathe as deeply as you normally would. Ozone also can permanently change the structure of your lungs.
- But ozone isn't the only type of pollution that can affect your health. Particles in the air also can affect your lungs – and your heart. So EPA, in cooperation with state and local air agencies, is making AQI particle pollution forecasts available in many U.S. cities.

Particle Pollution Forecasts Begin Fall 2003

- Starting in October, more than 100 U.S. cities will issue AQI forecasts for “particle pollution” – microscopic particles in the air that can get deep into the lungs – potentially causing serious health problems.
- Particle pollution comes from a wide range of sources, from power plants and industry, to cars, trucks and buses, to wood stoves and forest fires. Some particles are released when fuels burn. Others form in the atmosphere, from reactions between gases released from power plants and factories.
- Unlike summertime ozone, particle pollution can occur year-round – and that means it can affect your health year-round.
- Particles can affect both your respiratory system and your heart. Particle pollution has been linked to a number of health problems ranging from asthma attacks to heart attacks – and even early death in people with heart or lung disease.
- You can reduce your exposure to particle pollution by acting on the AQI forecast for your area. These forecasts, available all year, will use the familiar color-coded scale to let you know about the next day's particle levels. The forecasts also will include recommendations that can help you reduce your pollution exposure. In the summer, you may see forecasts for both particle pollution *and* ozone.
- Meteorologists in state and local air quality agencies develop AQI forecasts real-time air quality information in conjunction with weather forecasts.

Are You At Risk?

- Air pollution can affect everyone, and it can be especially harmful for certain groups of people. Check the table on the back of this page to see if you're in one of these groups.
- Don't assume that you're safe just because you're healthy. At elevated levels, particle pollution and ground-level ozone can be a threat to *everyone's* health. For more information, go to www.epa.gov/airnow.