



What you need to know about...

Finding Daily Air Quality Information

Air pollution is harmful to everyone, and it especially affects people who are very young or old or have lung disease, such as chronic obstruction pulmonary disease (COPD), asthma or lung cancer. To protect yourself, be aware of when air quality has reached unhealthy levels.

What types of air pollution do I monitor?

There are two types of air that can reach unhealthy levels and affect sensitive groups, including:

- **Smog.** Smog forms when solar energy “cooks” pollution from vehicles, industry and other sources. High ozone levels occur on sunny days when temperatures exceed 85 degrees and there is little wind. Daily ozone levels are typically highest in the evening and lowest around sunrise.
- **Soot,** or fine particle, pollution. Soot can reach high levels under the same weather conditions. It can also occur at any time of the year when dry, calm and clear conditions can concentrate particle pollution. The pollution is usually a by-product of combustion, such as auto and diesel exhaust, power plant emissions and wood smoke.

How do I stay informed?

The U.S. EPA created the Air Quality Index as an easy-to-understand color-coded system to provide air quality information to the public (see graph to right). AQI information is provided to area news media and several other outlets.

How do I find the Air Quality Index?

- **Phone hotlines**
City of Chicago (city only):
(312) 744-4365

Cook County (metro area):
(708) 865-6320

- **Internet**
Sign up for the EnviroFlash email service at www.airnow.gov. This provides air quality notices such as forecasts and action day notifications in your area of interest.

Partners for Clean Air announce Air Pollution Action Days at www.cleantheair.org during multi-day air pollution events when air quality is expected to reach unhealthy levels.

What should I do on Air Quality Action Days?

On days when the ozone or particle pollution is expected to be high, taking steps as an individual will help reduce air pollution and keep the air cleaner. Start by:

- Choosing a cleaner commute. Carpool or take public transit.
- Avoiding idling and running errands during one trip.
- Reducing or eliminating fireplace and wood stove use.

See a complete list of what to do under the “What You Can Do” section on www.airnow.gov.

Air Quality Index Levels of Health Concern	Numerical Value	Meaning
Good	0-50	Air quality is considered satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk.
Moderate	51-100	Air quality is acceptable; however, for some pollutants there may be a moderate health concern for a very small number of people who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	101-150	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is not likely to be affected.
Unhealthy	151-200	Everyone may begin to experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.

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