

Air Quality ACTION DAYS

AIR QUALITY ACTION GUIDE

Air Quality Numerical Value	Action Steps for Everyone
GOOD 0-50	No pollution, enjoy outdoor activities! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Carpool, use public transit, bike or walk ◆ Keep engines tuned ◆ Use environmentally friendly products
MODERATE 51-100	Some pollution in the air <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Limit driving, consolidate trips ◆ Reduce car idling ◆ Conserve electricity, set A/C to 78°F
UNHEALTHY for Sensitive Groups 101-150	Children and adults with respiratory and heart sensitivity should limit outdoor activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Refuel after dusk, use fuel-efficient vehicles ◆ Avoid driving, use transit, telework ◆ Avoid using aerosol products
UNHEALTHY 151-200	Unhealthy for everyone <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Avoid lawn mowing or use electric mowers ◆ Put off painting until air quality improves ◆ Limit strenuous outdoor activities
VERY UNHEALTHY 201-300	Very unhealthy for everyone <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Everyone should avoid outdoor physical activities, especially sensitive groups

www.cleanairpartners.net Hotline 877.515.4593



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We can have more days like this.
Do your share so we can breathe cleaner air!



Air Quality ACTION DAYS

Your guide to cleaner, healthier air
in the Baltimore/Washington region
www.cleanairpartners.net

What's the Quality of the Air Today?

Since air pollution is not always visible, the Air Quality Index (AQI) is a scale designed to measure how clean the air really is. Daily air quality forecasts for the Baltimore/Washington region can be found at www.cleanairpartners.net or by calling 877-515-4593.

The AQI is divided into several color-coded categories to help you understand what local air quality means to your health:

0-50	Good; air quality is considered good, and air pollution poses little or no risk.
51-100	Moderate; air quality may pose a moderate risk, especially for those who are sensitive to air pollution.
101-150	Unhealthy for sensitive groups; children and adults with respiratory and heart ailments should limit time spent outside. The general public is not likely to be affected.
151-200	Unhealthy; everyone may experience more serious health effects and should limit their outdoor activity.
201-300	Very unhealthy; everyone should avoid outdoor activities, especially individuals with heart and breathing ailments, children, and older adults.

The Action Guide, shown on the right, is an important tool that can inform people about how to limit levels of air pollution. Each suggestion offers a way to reduce the number of Code Red days. The secret is to protect the environment all day, every day—especially before the pollution levels increase.

We can reduce air pollution one small step at a time. Find out more at www.cleanairpartners.net.

Action Guide: Protecting the Air and Your Health

On Code Green Days

- ◆ Carpool, use public transportation, bike or walk.
- ◆ Keep engines tuned.
- ◆ Use environmentally friendly products.

On Code Yellow Days

- ◆ Limit driving, consolidate trips.
- ◆ Reduce car idling.
- ◆ Conserve electricity—choose ENERGY STAR™ appliances and lighting, turn off lights when leaving a room, and set air conditioners to no lower than 78° Fahrenheit.

On Code Orange Days

- ◆ Refuel after dusk, use fuel-efficient vehicles.
- ◆ Avoid driving, use public transit, telework.
- ◆ Avoid using aerosol products.

These people should limit prolonged outdoor activities:

- ◆ Children
- ◆ Adults who have trouble breathing outdoors
- ◆ Individuals with respiratory problems or heart ailments

On Code Red Days

- Follow the guidelines listed earlier AND
- ◆ Avoid lawn mowing or use electric mowers.
 - ◆ Put off painting until air quality improves.
 - ◆ Reduce outdoor activities for children.
 - ◆ Limit strenuous outdoor activities.

On Code Purple Days

- Follow all the guidelines listed earlier AND
- ◆ Everyone should avoid outdoor physical activities, especially children, older adults, and those with heart and respiratory ailments.

Facts About Pollution

What causes air pollution?

Mostly ground-level ozone and particles in the air, called particle pollution.

Ozone

In the upper atmosphere, ozone is helpful. It is a gas that protects the Earth from

harmful ultraviolet rays. But on the ground, ozone is another story. Common air pollutants, such as Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) and Nitrogen Oxides (NOx), are released from the exhaust from cars, paint, and aerosol products. These pollutants react with heat and sunlight, producing ground-level ozone. Unhealthy levels of ground-level ozone occur during the summer months, typically May-September.

Too much ground-level ozone in the air we breathe affects many people—individuals who exercise regularly outdoors, those with respiratory problems, and especially our children. Children are at high risk for ozone-related problems because their lungs are still developing, they breathe faster than adults, and they tend to spend more time outdoors, especially in the summer, when ground-level ozone levels are highest.

Ground-level ozone can irritate the respiratory system, causing coughing, throat irritation, and/or uncomfortable sensations in the chest. Over time, lung tissue may become permanently scarred, resulting in reduced lung function.



Ground-level ozone can affect your health.

Particle Pollution

Particles, or particulate matter, are terms used to describe the mixture of solid particles and liquid droplets in the air. The size of the particles is directly linked to the amount of damage this kind of pollution can cause. "Fine" particles are invisible to the naked eye and can only be seen using powerful microscopes. They are the most dangerous because they can get deep into the lungs and even into the bloodstream, potentially causing serious health problems.

Sources of fine particles include—

- ◆ Exhaust from motor vehicles
- ◆ Residential wood burning
- ◆ Power plants and some industrial processes
- ◆ Forest fires and agricultural burning

Unlike ground-level ozone, particles are not a seasonal pollutant. High levels can occur any time of the year.

Sensitive groups for particle pollution include those with heart or lung disease, older adults (who may have undiagnosed heart or lung ailments), and children. Particle pollution can lead to increased hospital and emergency room visits and even death.



A good air day (top) and a bad air day (bottom) from the DC air quality web cam.

More Action Steps

Now that you know more about the problems related to pollution, consider taking even more steps to keep it under control. Making small changes in your lifestyle at home, at work, and on the road can make a big difference.

Begin the day right. Check the AQI at www.cleanairpartners.net. Modify your plans if a Code Orange, Red, or Purple day is predicted. Protect yourself, and others in your care, by taking appropriate actions, such as those recommended below.

At Home

- ◆ Postpone mowing and trimming or use electric garden equipment.
- ◆ Postpone painting or use water-based paint instead of oil-based paint.
- ◆ Replace your charcoal grill with a propane gas grill.
- ◆ Choose ENERGY STAR™ appliances and lighting.
- ◆ Cut back on heating and air conditioning when you can and turn off lights and appliances when not in use.
- ◆ Clean heating filters each month.

At Work

Employers have a unique opportunity to make a difference. They can promote programs that help employees make positive lifestyle changes. For example, employers can encourage staff to use public transportation or carpool. Employers also can give employees the option of working from home.

For more information about becoming involved in clean air activities, check out the Air Quality Action Days Employer Program at www.cleanairpartners.net.



Participate in Bike to Work day and other Clean Air Partners events.

On the Road

- ◆ Keep driving to a minimum.
- ◆ Fill up your gas tank during evening hours. Avoid spilling gas and "topping off" the tank. Replace gas tank cap tightly.
- ◆ Have your car tuned regularly by replacing the oil and air filter, and keep tires properly inflated and aligned.
- ◆ Carpool or use public transportation when possible.
- ◆ Combine your errands into one trip.
- ◆ Avoid revving or idling your engine.
- ◆ Avoid long drive-through lines; instead, park your car and go in.
- ◆ Looking for a new vehicle? Consider purchasing a fuel-efficient model or a hybrid that runs on an electric motor and gasoline engine.



Now you know **WHY** air quality is important. See **WHAT** you can do to make a difference.

START NOW. Your health, the health of your loved ones, and the quality of our environment depend on it.

CLEAN AIR PARTNERS™

Clean Air Partners is a nonprofit, public-private partnership in the Baltimore/Washington region, formed to promote voluntary actions that individuals and employers can take to reduce air pollution. For more information, go to cleanairpartners.net.