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AIR QUALITY INDEX FORECASTS NOW AVAILABLE YEAR-ROUND

More Than 100 U.S. Cities Now Predicting Particle Pollution Levels

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Beginning Oct. 1 new information on air quality will be available year-round in more than 100 U.S. cities. As part of an ongoing effort to protect the American public from air pollution, the Environmental Protection Agency, together with state and local governments, is expanding current air quality forecasts to include daily information on particle pollution.

"The Bush Administration is working to further improve air quality by continuing to reduce car and truck emissions and developing new standards for non-road diesel vehicles in addition to a number of other efforts," said EPA Acting Administrator Marianne Horinko. "Monitoring and emissions data show tremendous air quality improvement over the past three decades, but there's more to do. As our work progresses, the expanded Air Quality Index forecasts will help millions of people protect their health – especially people with heart or lung disease, older adults, and children," Horinko said.

The Air Quality Index, or AQI, is a color-coded system designed to inform the public about daily air pollution levels in their communities. During the summer months, local broadcast meteorologists in nearly 300 U.S. cities use the AQI to provide daily ozone forecasts as part of their weather casts. Beginning Oct. 1, the use of the AQI will be expanded to include daily, year-round forecasts for particle pollution. EPA has worked with state and local governments to make this information available for more than 100 cities. EPA expects this number to grow in the coming months as additional areas begin forecasting.

Unlike ozone pollution, which is known to be highest during the summer months, particle pollution can vary throughout the year. While unhealthy levels occur on only a limited number of days, the expanded AQI forecasts give people the information they need to protect their health all year.

"Particle pollution" refers to a mixture of microscopic solids and liquid droplets found in the air. Particles can be emitted directly – such as in smoke – or form when gases react in the atmosphere. Particle pollution comes from a number of sources, including cars and trucks, industry, fires, and power plants. Some of these particles, known as fine particles, can reach deep into the lungs, where they can affect both the lungs and the heart.

The EPA has already taken a number of actions to reduce particle pollution, including setting new stringent standards for cars and heavy-duty diesel trucks and buses. Similar tough standards are being developed for diesel engines used in large non-road equipment. The EPA's annual air trends report and latest acid rain data show steady and significant air quality improvement. Since 1970, emissions of the six principle air pollutants have been cut 48 percent. According to EPA acid rain program data, in 2002 SO2 emissions from power plants were nine percent lower than in 2000 and 41 percent lower than 1980. NOx emissions from

power plants also continued a downward trend, measuring 4.5 million tons in 2002, a 13 percent reduction from 2000 and a 33 percent decline from 1990 emissions levels. EPA is also in the process of implementing the nation's first standards for fine particles that are 2.5 micrometers in diameter and smaller. In addition, President Bush has proposed the Clear Skies Act of 2003 – an innovative and aggressive program to reduce emissions from power plants. If passed by Congress, Clear Skies would achieve immediate and dramatic reductions in particle pollution.

High levels of particle pollution can affect the health of nearly every American, however certain groups, including people with heart or lung disease; older adults; and children, can also be at risk at lower levels. Particle pollution has been linked to asthma attacks, chronic bronchitis, changes in heart rate, arrhythmias and heart attacks, among other health problems.

Air quality forecasts are available on local television stations, on state and local air quality agency web sites, on USA Today's weather page and on The Weather Channel. Forecasts, health information, and maps showing real-time particle levels also are available on EPA's AIRNow web site, at www.epa.gov/airnow .

The following is an initial list of cities and metropolitan areas that will be issuing AQI forecasts year-round:

Birmingham	AL
Phoenix	AZ
Los Angeles	CA
Modesto	CA
Oakland	CA
Sacramento	CA
San Diego	CA
San Francisco	CA
San Jose	CA
Stockton	CA
Denver	CO
Bridgeport	CT
Danbury	CT
Hartford	CT
Middletown	CT
New Haven	CT
New London - Groton	CT
Stafford	CT
Torrington	CT
Washington	DC
Wilmington	DE
Miami	FL
Orlando	FL
Tampa	FL
West Palm Beach	FL
Atlanta	GA
Honolulu	HI
Coeur dAlene	ID
Lewiston	ID
Pocatello	ID
Twin Falls	ID
Idaho Falls	ID

Boise	ID
Des Moines	IA
Indianapolis	IN
Chicago	IL
Peoria	IL
Rockford	IL
Springfield	IL
New Orleans	LA
Boston	MA
Springfield	MA
Worcester	MA
Baltimore	MD
Bangor	ME
Lewiston - Auburn	ME
Portland	ME
Detroit	MI
Minneapolis-St.Paul	MN
Kansas City	MO
St. Louis	MO
Charlotte	NC
Greensboro-Winston-Salem-High Point	NC
Brentwood	NH
Claremont	NH
Concord	NH
Conway	NH
Haverhill	NH
Keene	NH
Laconia	NH
Manchester	NH
Nashua	NH
Pittsburg	NH
Portsmouth	NH
Rye	NH
Stafford County	NH
Atlantic City	NJ
Bayonne	NJ
Camden	NJ
Cherry Hill	NJ
Clifton	NJ
East Orange	NJ
Elizabeth	NJ
Hackensack	NJ
Jersey City	NJ
Millville	NJ
Nacote Cr. - Brig.	NJ
New Jersey	Northern
New Jersey	Southern
Newark	NJ
Passaic	NJ
Paterson	NJ
Perth Amboy	NJ

Plainfield	NJ
Ramapo	NJ
Rider University	NJ
Rutgers University	NJ
Trenton	NJ
Union City	NJ
Vineland	NJ
Las Vegas	NV
Albany	NY
Babylon	NY
Base-White Mountain	NY
Belleayre Mountain	NY
Buffalo	NY
Camden	NY
Camp Georgetown	NY
Dunkirk	NY
Middleport	NY
New York	NY
Rochester	NY
Syracuse	NY
Westfield	NY
Whiteplains	NY
Williamson	NY
Cincinnati	OH
Cleveland	OH
Columbus	OH
Dayton	OH
Lawton	OK
Oklahoma City	OK
Tulsa	OK
Portland	OR
Philadelphia	PA
Pittsburgh	PA
Newport	RI
Providence	RI
West Greenwich	RI
Memphis	TN
Nashville	TN
Dallas	TX
Houston	TX
Austin	TX
San Antonio	TX
Victoria	TX
El Paso	TX
Tyler-Longview-Marshall	TX
Corpus Christi	TX
Beaumont	TX
Salt Lake City	UT
Bennington	VT
Burlington	VT
Aberdeen	WA

Bremerton-Silverdale-Bainbridge	WA
Everette-Marysville-Lynnwood	WA
Olympia-Lacey-Tumwater	WA
Port Angeles	WA
Port Townsend	WA
Seattle-Bellevue-Kent Valley	WA
Shelton	WA
Spokane	WA
Tacoma-Puyallup	WA