



2013 Air Quality Forecasting Season Kicks Off Amid Reports That St. Louis Remains Among the Most Polluted Cities in the Nation

May 3 2013 3:44 PM

Air quality forecasting officially begins today for the 2013 summer season, and with the region now ranked 25th out of 277 metropolitan areas in the nation for ozone pollution, area residents are being urged to keep an eye on the forecast to protect their health, and to step up their efforts to clear the air to help reverse the troubling trends. The latest State of the Air report from the American Lung Association shows after two years ranked as 34th in the nation for ozone pollution, the main component of smog, the region now has moved up into the top 25 slot, underscoring that more needs to be done to reduce ozone forming emissions. While the report shows a slight improvement in year round particulate pollution as we've dropped from 10th to 12th, that 12th place ranking still places the St. Louis area among the most polluted cities in the nation.

The news comes as the region prepares to settle into the sizzling summer months when air quality conditions are typically at their worst, prompting the St. Louis Regional Clean Air Partnership to ramp up its efforts to educate area residents on how the emissions-reducing actions they take can play a role in improving air quality conditions across the region.

“Both particle pollution and the ozone pollution that is such a concern for the area during summer months can negatively affect the health of all of us, but children, the elderly and the many individuals who suffer from respiratory disease are particularly impacted,” notes Susannah Fuchs, Senior Director of Environmental Health for the American Lung Association of the Plains-Gulf Region and spokesperson for The Partnership. “The good news is each of us has the power to take some simple steps that will go a long way toward reducing the emissions that lead to ozone formation. And since the way we commute has one of the most profound effects on our air quality, that’

s where we'd like people to focus their efforts and consider exploring transit and carpooling or vanpooling as alternatives to driving solo."

Sharing the ride and other actions such as combining errands into a single trip, telecommuting and walking and biking more to get around town help take cars off area roads along with the related emissions. These actions are especially critical when poor air conditions are in the forecast. For those whose jobs require them to spend time solo behind the wheel, there are many other green lifestyle changes they can consider that can also positively impact air quality and improve lung health in the region. These changes include efforts to conserve energy, recycle, reduce waste and reuse items and provide additional options so everyone in the region can do their share for cleaner air.

As air quality forecasting gets underway for 2013, area residents are encouraged to visit the Clean Air Partnership's website at www.cleanair-stlouis.com and sign up to receive the daily forecast in their email inboxes via the Environmental Protection Agency's EnviroFlash air quality alert system. Individuals can also find the forecast on the Clean Air Partnership's Facebook page or follow the organization on Twitter @gatewaycleanair for daily updates.

"While the results for our region are disappointing, overall the State of the Air 2013 report shows that the air quality nationwide continues the long-term trend to much healthier air. We hope that the local findings help to reinforce how important it is for area residents to stay up-to-date on the changing air quality conditions and re-engage the public in the clean air effort," said Fuchs. "If we all do a little, the region will breathe easier this summer and we'll have a better chance of seeing lasting improvements in the years to come."

To learn more about the health effects of poor air quality and steps you can take to improve air quality at home, at work and on the road, log on to www.cleanair-stlouis.com. To access the American Lung Association's 2013 State of the Air report, visit www.stateoftheair.org.

About the State of the Air Report

The American Lung Association's "State of the Air 2013" report is an annual, national air quality "report card." The 2013 report—the 14th annual release—uses the most recent quality assured air pollution data, compiled by the EPA, in 2009, 2010, and 2011. These data come from the official monitors for the two most widespread types of pollution, ozone (smog) and particle pollution (PM 2.5, also known as soot). The report grades counties and ranks cities and counties based on their scores for ozone, year-round particle pollution and short-term particle pollution levels.

About the St. Louis Regional Clean Air Partnership

The St. Louis Regional Clean Air Partnership was formed in 1995, led by the American Lung Association, St. Louis Regional Chamber and Growth Association, East-West Gateway Council of Governments, Washington University and others, to increase awareness of regional air quality issues and to encourage activities to reduce air pollution emissions.