



Clean Air Partnership Announces Return of Air Quality Forecasting for 2020

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ST. LOUIS - Air quality forecasting resumes May 1 in the St. Louis metropolitan area, and the region's ozone season is kicking off with one advantage that should help to keep emissions at bay in the coming weeks. While the region continues to respond to the ongoing pandemic, fewer automobiles are taking to the roads as many workers continue to telecommute to minimize the spread of COVID-19. However, once the state and region gradually open back up for business, it is expected that traffic will ramp back up and so will the potential for increased emissions that contribute to ozone formation.

The importance of keeping the region's air clean is at an all-time high as millions of Americans – including St. Louis residents – are living in communities impacted by unhealthy levels of pollution in the form of high ozone days, more particle pollution days and higher annual particle levels than ever before. According to the American Lung Association's 2020 State of the Air report, 2.5 million children and 10.6 million adults with asthma live in counties that received an "F" grade for at least one pollutant. Likewise, more than 316,000 children and 1.4 million adults with asthma live in

counties failing all three tests, meaning there is still much work to be done to protect local communities from the growing risks to public health. As ozone forecasting season begins, here’s a look at the latest rankings for ozone pollution across the region for counties in the non-attainment area included in the American Lung Association’s [report](#):

MissouriIllinois

Jefferson D Jersey F

St. Charles F Macoupin C

St. Louis County F Madison F

St. Louis City F St. Clair F

“The air quality is usually in pretty healthy ranges at the start of forecasting and that’s compounded this year due to the COVID-19 related reduction in auto emissions, but it’s clear we are far from a clean bill of health for lung health in our region,” said Susannah Fuchs, Director of Clean Air for the American Lung Association in Missouri. “With stay-at-home orders being lifted in many counties in our region and more likely to follow in the coming weeks, we anticipate people will be back at work and back on the roads when we’re settling into the summer months when we’re at greater risk for higher levels of ozone pollution.”

With that in mind, the Clean Air Partnership urges area residents to continue their efforts to take voluntary steps to reduce emissions in the coming months. Those actions play a critical role in improving air quality conditions and helping people across the region breathe easier, which is especially important for children, older adults and those who suffer from lung diseases. Given that some of those vulnerable populations are the same ones most at risk from the Coronavirus, these voluntary measures take on additional significance in the current environment.

That call for voluntary action has been the constant drum beat for the Clean Air Partnership for 25 years as it has been a champion for cleaner air in the St. Louis region. And in this milestone year, the Clean Air Partnership is holding steadfast to its mission of educating the bi-state area about the health risks associated with poor air quality and the impact of everyday actions on the environment.

Signing up to receive the Partnership's daily air quality color-coded forecast via email at www.cleanair-stlouis.com helps to ensure St. Louisans know what the next day's air quality will be and if they should alter their outdoor activities to minimize exposure to polluted air. Should the forecast call for poor air quality in the form of an Orange or Red Air Quality Day, the hope is that people will also take specific steps to further reduce emissions. While weather conditions do play a significant role in our region's daily air quality, transportation-related emissions have always been one of the biggest contributors to air pollution, and the choices people make on how to get around affects air quality and the health of the region.

"While we typically promote carpooling and transit use as great alternatives to driving solo, this isn't the time to load up in a vanpool or flock to public transit given that it's currently recommended that the public take trips on transit only for essential purposes," said Fuchs. "At some point in the future those steps will once again be important, but in the meantime, there are various others people can take to help clear the air."

Fuchs notes that actions like walking and biking instead of using a vehicle for short trips, combining errands into a single trip, not topping off your gas tank, avoiding vehicle idling or even opting for electric vehicles can all greatly impact the amount of ozone-forming emissions generated on any given day. Additionally, there are many other eco-friendly lifestyle changes unrelated to commuting that individuals and businesses can consider to positively impact air quality and improve lung health. These changes include efforts to conserve energy, recycle, reduce waste and reuse items.

The Clean Air Partnership's website at www.cleanair-stlouis.com offers many other tips to help clear the air along with a wealth of information on the health effects of poor air quality. While on the site, people can also sign up to receive the Partnership's monthly E-Newsletter and the daily forecast in their email inboxes via the Environmental Protection Agency's EnviroFlash air quality alert system. Additional air quality information and the daily forecast can be accessed by liking the Clean Air Partnership on Facebook, or by following the organization on Twitter @gatewaycleanair. To access the American Lung Association's 2020 "State of the Air" report, visit www.lung.org.

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About the American Lung Association

The American Lung Association is the leading organization working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease, through research, education and advocacy. The work of the American Lung Association is focused on four strategic imperatives: to defeat lung cancer; to improve the air we breathe; to reduce the burden of lung disease on individuals and their families; and to eliminate tobacco use and

tobacco-related diseases. For more information about the American Lung Association, a holder of the Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Guide Seal, or to support the work it does, call 1-800-LUNGUSA (1-800-586-4872) or visit: Lung.org.

About the Clean Air Partnership

The 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.