



2021 Air Quality Forecasting Season Kicks Off As Latest 'State Of The Air' Report Reveals Good and Bad For St. Louis Region

May 3 2021 3:20 PM

Air Quality Index (AQI) Values	Levels of Health Concern	Colors
<i>When the AQI is in this range:</i>	<i>..air quality conditions are:</i>	<i>...as symbolized by this color:</i>
0 to 50	Good	Green
51 to 100	Moderate	Yellow
101 to 150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	Orange
151 to 200	Unhealthy	Red
201 to 300	Very Unhealthy	Purple
301 to 500	Hazardous	Maroon

ST. LOUIS, MO. - Just in time for daily air quality forecasting to make its return for the 2021 season tomorrow, the American Lung Association's latest "State of the Air" report indicates some nationwide progress on cleaning up air pollution, but 41.1 percent of the population — more than 135 million Americans — are still living in areas with unhealthy air quality. While this is 14.8 million fewer people breathing unhealthy air compared to the years covered by the 2020 report (2016-2018), there is still much work to be done to protect our local communities from the continued risks to public health resulting from high levels of ozone and particle pollution. The Clean Air Partnership is reminding area residents of the importance of staying informed about the quality of air

we breathe, whether it is in a healthy “green” range, unhealthy “red” range, or somewhere in between.

For the fifth consecutive year, the St. Louis region escaped being ranked among the 25 most ozone-polluted cities in the U.S. coming in at number 26; however, the area landed in a four-way tie for the 20th spot on the list of most-polluted cities by year-round particle pollution. Rising global temperatures and disruption of both short and long-term weather patterns caused by climate change are reportedly making it harder to protect human health and putting millions more people at risk, including those in the St. Louis region and far too many other cities across the nation. Despite the three years included in this year’s report (2017-2019) being relatively cooler than those in the previous report, they still rank among the six hottest years on record globally. 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 D

St. Charles F Macoupin C

St. Louis County F Madison F

St. Louis City F St. Clair D

“Even though it’s encouraging that the St. Louis region stayed off the list of most ozone-polluted cities with more counties receiving a higher grade in this year’s annual “State of the Air” report compared to last year, the data clearly shows we’re far from a clean bill of health for our region,” said Susannah Fuchs, Director of Clean Air for the American Lung Association in Missouri. “While weather conditions do play a significant role in our region’s daily air quality, the dramatic reductions in transportation-related emissions during the pandemic provided a compelling reminder that our commuting choices affect air quality and the health of the region, which we hope to see positively reflected in the numbers for next year’s report.”

As the nation continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, research shows that reducing air pollution is critical for respiratory health now and in the future, especially for populations most at risk, such as children and older adults, people of color and individuals with underlying health conditions. Given that some of those vulnerable populations are the same ones most at risk from the novel coronavirus, these voluntary measures take on additional significance in the current environment, particularly for the 20.7 million individuals living in counties that received an “F” grade for all three air pollution measures.

“As we prepare to settle into the summer months when we’re at greater risk for higher levels of ozone pollution, the Clean Air Partnership is calling attention to the trends observed during 2020 to encourage area residents to remain steadfast in their efforts to take voluntary steps to reduce emissions,” Fuchs added. “These include the continuation of eco-friendly actions like telecommuting and, for those who do begin returning to the office, giving greater consideration to alternatives to the solo commute like the region’s public transit system and ridesharing.”

With the air quality forecasting season resuming May 1st, the Partnership also ramps up its outreach to educate residents of the St. Louis metro 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 color-coded daily air quality 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 take specific steps to further reduce emissions.

Fuchs notes that actions like combining errands into a single trip, hopping on a bike for short trips instead of hopping in your car, not topping off your gas tank, avoiding vehicle idling or opting for electric vehicles can greatly impact the amount of ozone-forming emissions on any given day and help people across the region breathe easier. Likewise, there are also many other eco-friendly lifestyle changes unrelated to commuting that individuals and businesses can consider to positively impact air quality and improve lung health, including efforts to conserve energy, recycle, reduce waste, reuse items and more.

The Clean Air Partnership’s [website](#) 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 2021 "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.