



Air Quality Fact Sheet for the San Antonio Region

What's up with our air?

Air pollution is a health concern in the San Antonio area that requires a shared commitment from local agencies, businesses, and individuals to ensure the region meets national air quality standards and to protect our community and the environment.

What causes the problem?

The most common form of air pollution in the San Antonio region is ground-level ozone, a major component of smog. Ground-level ozone forms readily in the atmosphere during warm, sunny days. Sunlight causes chemicals from the fuels we burn (e.g., gasoline and diesel) and vapors from such products as gasoline and paint solvents to react together and form ozone.

Ozone, as well as the chemicals that form ozone, are easily transported by the wind. Consequently, some ozone pollution in the San Antonio area comes from other regions of the state, the nation, and the world. Because solving our local ozone challenge requires addressing both local and non-local pollution sources, local air quality planners will continue to assess impacts of non-local pollution sources and will advocate appropriate measures to reduce the effect of "transport."

Why is it important for us to improve our air quality?

Prolonged exposure to ground-level ozone produces harmful health effects, particularly among children, people who are active outdoors, and people with respiratory illnesses.

Ground-level ozone is measured by monitoring stations established at various locations around San Antonio and adjacent counties. The data provided by these monitoring stations allow State meteorologists to determine air quality in the San Antonio region. Meteorologists use a combination of tools, including monitored ozone data and weather information, to make short-term predictions about changes in ozone pollution levels.

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What steps can an individual take to improve air quality?

Everyone can help by heeding Air Quality Health Alerts and making simple changes in their daily routines to reduce pollution. Air Quality Health Alerts are issued when weather and atmospheric conditions are favorable for ozone formation.

Raising awareness engages people to do their part in protecting our air quality. Maintaining the quality of our air is everyone's business. We can take simple steps to reduce air pollution. Examples include:

-  Limit your driving: carpool, use mass transit, teleconference, walk, ride a bike, and use online services such as electronic banking;
-  Operate your vehicle properly: avoid jack rabbit starts and drive the speed limit,
-  Reduce engine idling by avoiding drive through lanes

When pollution is forecast to reach unhealthy concentrations, AACOG distributes an **Air Quality Health Alert** to local media, schools, government agencies, and businesses.

Air Quality Standards

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sets thresholds for ozone and five other air pollutants considered harmful to public health and the environment as required by the Clean Air Act. Collectively, these thresholds are referred to as the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. The standards are subject to periodic review and may be modified if it is determined that they do not provide adequate protection of health and the environment. To learn more about these standards and pollutants, visit <http://www.epa.gov/glo/standards.html>.

In addition to health and environmental issues, the consequences of failing to meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ozone include mobility challenges and control strategy requirements that impact economic growth in the area's industry and manufacturing sectors.



Who is responsible for local air quality planning?

The Air Improvement Resources (AIR) Executive Committee of AACOG addresses air quality issues in the region and is a collaboration of local elected officials representing the counties and largest cities of the San Antonio – New Braunfels Metropolitan Statistical Area. These officials direct research to develop air quality strategies, and can create legislation within their local jurisdictions in order to implement region-wide strategies.



What happens if a region fails to meet the federal air quality standards?

The answer depends on the severity of the air pollution problem. Regions in "marginal" nonattainment of air quality standards typically implement less stringent control measures than "severe" nonattainment areas. The Clean Air Act addresses many different pollution sources and a variety of clean-up methods to reduce common air pollutants. Many of the clean-up requirements involve large industrial sources as well as motor vehicles. Controls for smaller pollution sources, such as gasoline stations and paint shops, may also be required.

Simple steps to improve air quality (continued)

-  Refuel your vehicle after 6:00 pm on Air Quality Health Alert days;
-  Make sure you follow the recommended maintenance schedule for your vehicle;
-  Keep your vehicle's tires properly inflated;
-  Do not continue dispensing fuel after the pump "clicks;" and
-  Replace your vehicle's gas cap securely after refueling.

For more tips visit www.CleanAirDrive.com

To receive Air Quality Health Alert emails, visit: www.aacog.com/list.aspx

Other helpful websites:

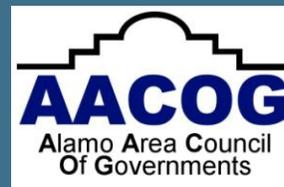
NuRide
www.nuride.com

AirNow
<http://airnow.gov>

Drive Clean Across Texas
www.drivecleanacrosstexas.org

TCEQ
www.tceq.state.tx.us

AACOG Air Quality Page
www.aacog.com/air



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