



NEWS

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Household Products Emit 52 Tons of Pollution Daily

Common products account for 10 percent of summertime air pollution

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif., August 18, 2003 – The Bay Area Air Quality Management District (Air District) wants residents to curb their use of certain types of common household products which contribute significantly to air pollution.

On an average day in the Bay Area, consumer products such as hairsprays, spray deodorants, pesticides, household cleaners and paints emit more than 52 tons of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) or 10 percent of summertime air pollution. By contrast, local power plants account for about one percent of Bay Area air pollution. Daily summertime emissions from household consumer products are equal to the emissions from 1.6 million cars driving 30 miles.

The 2003 smog season is pivotal for Bay Area air quality. A "clean" season means that the region meets the criteria to be in attainment with the one-hour federal ozone standard. Being an attainment areas means cleaner air to breathe, fewer planning requirements, and less likelihood that transit and highway funding will be frozen because of legal challenges to clean air plans.

"The Bay Area is very close to achieving federal attainment status," said William Norton, CEO of the Air District. "Every small effort makes a difference in improving air quality. We're extremely close to meeting the standards. A few small changes in our household habits can help attain our goal of having cleaner air."

In addition, as more and more children suffer from asthma, air quality in and around the home can be particularly important. According to the American Lung Association, there are more than 88,000 asthmatic children in the Bay Area. Asthma attacks can be triggered by ozone pollution and are the leading cause of childhood hospitalizations in the state. Reducing pollution in the home can help minimize high risk days for asthma sufferers.

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Here are some suggestions ways to reduce air pollution from consumer products:

- Avoid the aerosol spray forms of products such as hairsprays, insecticides, deodorants, and air fresheners. Instead, look for products that are gels, solids, powders, or pump liquids.
- Use non-chemical alternatives such as a solution of vinegar and water for household cleaning.
- Choose water-based paints instead of oil-based paints.
- When in doubt, avoid VOC chemicals which usually have names ending in:
 - –ane (alkane)
 - –ene (toluene)
 - –ol (alcohol)
- Avoid products containing alcohol. They contribute to VOC emissions and only help the product dry faster. Instead, look for products that will clean without alcohol, such as citrus-based products.
- On Spare the Air days, avoid the use of consumer products that pollute until the weather cools down.
- For further “clean” household tips, visit www.sparetheair.org.

To sign up to receive Spare the Air notices via e-mail and for daily air quality forecasts, also visit www.sparetheair.org.

Air quality readings and forecasts are also available by phone at 1-800-HELP-AIR after 4 p.m.

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