



NEWS

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State Air Pollution Control Officers release new report

The California Air Pollution Control Officers Association today released its annual air quality report *California's Progress Toward Clean Air* for all 35 local air districts in the state documenting dramatic reductions in unhealthy levels of fine particulate pollution in every county reporting air quality data.

Fine particulate pollution, also known as PM2.5, is associated with a wide range of health effects from increased hospitalizations to premature deaths. The report also shows a general trend of improving air quality for ground-level ozone, although some counties and their air district face unique challenges in reducing levels of that pollutant.

"While each air district faces different local challenges, we all work in partnership toward cleaner air for California as a whole," said Brad Poiriez, CAPCOA board president and air pollution control officer for the Imperial County Air Pollution Control District.

"In the Bay Area, fine particulate pollution has continued to decrease in the region largely as the result of strict wintertime wood burning controls," said Jack Broadbent, executive officer of the Bay Area Air District. "But challenges remain – particularly in areas where mountains and hills concentrate wood smoke in local inland valley's which pose a serious health threat to many communities."

The report contains statistical information on ozone and PM2.5 air quality for 2000 and 2012 for each county; statewide air quality trends and detailed descriptions of air pollution control programs at each air quality district.

California and its individual air districts have made remarkable progress in cleaning the air during the past three decades in spite of dramatic increases in population and driving. From 1980 to 2010, the state's population increased by 65 percent and daily miles driven by all vehicles increased by 137 percent. But thanks to a comprehensive air pollution control strategy, smog-forming pollutants were cut by 55 percent during the same period. California's largest industrial plants also cut their greenhouse gas emissions by 17 percent between 2008 and 2011.

These improvements have occurred in spite of the fact that neither the state nor local air districts have the authority to regulate federally controlled sources of air pollution including ships, locomotives and aircraft.

And yet daunting challenges remain to reach current air quality standards, especially for the San Joaquin Valley and Southern California's South Coast Air Basin, the two most severely polluted regions in the nation. Recent studies show that pollutants are harmful to our health at lower levels than previously thought. As a result, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) has revised key air quality standards to be more stringent and health-protective. This means that local air districts and the state have to develop clean air plans requiring significant further emission reductions from all sources including cars, trucks, businesses and consumer products.

The Bay Area Air District has been working for decades to reduce human exposure to pollutants like particulates and ozone. Thanks to these efforts, pollution levels in the Bay Area have been significantly reduced, resulting in significant public health benefits and increasing average life expectancy in the region. But despite this progress, many recent health studies indicate that there are negative health effects associated with exposure to pollutants, especially to children, even at levels which meet the current air quality standards.

This report shows what we need to focus on to continue to improve air quality, what our current challenges are, and ultimately, how everyone can play an essential role in the process of working the clear California's air.

For a copy of *California's Progress Toward Clean Air*, visit www.capcoa.org. For more information about CAPCOA and the state's air districts, call 916-769-7769.