



## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP IMPROVE OUR AIR?

### *Summer Tips*

- Carpool, take the bus or ride your bike.
- Don't use charcoal to barbecue.
- Don't fuel up or mow the lawn until after 7 p.m.

### *Winter Tips*

- Use woodstoves and fireplaces wisely.
- Refrain from burning trash or yard waste.
- Conserve energy by setting the thermostat lower and use energy saving compact fluorescent light bulbs.
- Get regular engine tune-ups.

SOUTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA  
**AIR QUALITY**  
PARTNERSHIP, INC.



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# Air Quality in Southwest Pennsylvania

*It's Not Just  
Ozone Anymore*

[www.spaqp.org](http://www.spaqp.org)



## SOUTHWEST PA AIR QUALITY

Air pollution affects everyone. The average adult breathes more than 3,000 gallons of air every day.

Children breathe even more air per pound of body weight and are more susceptible to air pollution. In addition, those with sensitivities, the children, elderly, people with heart and lung disease or in the summer, adults who exercise outside, face problems when air quality pollutants rise beyond health standards.

## GROUND-LEVEL OZONE

*Ozone—good up high, bad nearby*

Ozone in the stratospheric ozone layer protects us from the sun's harmful rays. But at ground-level, where we breathe, it creates problems. From May to September, sunlight and high temperatures bake pollutants emitted by motor vehicles, power plants, industry and other sources to form smog, or ground-level ozone.

Short term exposure to high levels of ozone irritates the lung's airways causing inflammation. It can aggravate asthma and bronchitis and increase hospital admissions.

## PARTICLE POLLUTION

Particle pollution can be tiny drops of liquid or small particles of dust, metals, and other materials that float in the air. Some particles are dark or large enough to be seen as soot or smoke. Others are so small that they can only be detected with an electron microscope.

It comes from a variety of sources such as cars, diesel engines, power plants, industry, construction, forest fires, open burning, and wood combustion.

Although a year-round problem, particle pollution occurs primarily in the summer and during the colder months when woodstoves and fireplaces are in use.

## HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN AIR QUALITY LEVELS CHANGE?

The Southwest Air Quality Partnership, Inc. is made up of business, government and environmental groups and works to educate western Pennsylvania residents about the effects of air pollution and ways to make a difference.

The Partnership calls Air Quality Action Days year round to alert residents about the days when pollutant levels are elevated and may cause a problem for the young, elderly and those with respiratory diseases.

The Partnership also calls upon residents to take actions that can help reduce the pollutants in the air. Residents will likely see elevated ground-level ozone readings, and may also see problems with particle pollution in the summer. Particle pollution is generally a bigger issue in the spring and winter.

## AIR QUALITY ACTION DAYS

The Partnership relies on weather forecasting performed by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection which uses the Air Quality Index in its forecasts.

The Air Quality Index uses color codes to designate the level of pollutant for the day. Red on the Air Quality Index means an unhealthy day where everyone should limit outdoor activities. Orange indicates the air is unhealthy for outdoor activities. Yellow means sensitive people should limit outdoor activities. Green indicates good air quality with no health impacts expected.

Residents can take action to help reduce air pollutants year round. *See the What Can You Do To Help Improve Our Air panel for some action tips.*

Area residents have access to daily forecasts. at [www.spaqp.org](http://www.spaqp.org). Those may sign up to receive the daily forecast