

SPARE THE AIR PARTNER TOOLKIT

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Breathe
Better
Together

What is the Spare The Air program?

The Spare The Air program aims to measurably improve air quality in the Sacramento Federal Nonattainment Area (SFNA) and help residents protect themselves from air pollution. It does this by encouraging reduced use of gas-powered vehicles and equipment, providing air quality forecasts and pollution alerts, and offering educational materials to schools, businesses, residents, and community organizations. This public health initiative is a collaboration between five regional air districts: the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District, the Placer County Air Pollution Control District, the El Dorado County Air Quality Management District, the Feather River Air Quality Management District, and the Yolo-Solano Air Quality Management District.

What is the main cause of smog in the Sacramento Region?

Gas-powered vehicles and other mobile sources, such as cars, trucks, locomotives, buses, motorcycles, agricultural equipment, and construction equipment, contribute more than 70% of the emissions that produce smog. Smog forms when these emissions react with sunlight. This process occurs regularly and naturally, making it all the more important to take steps to reduce exposure.

What is the best way to help Spare The Air?

In short, use your gas-powered vehicle less. Carpooling, riding transit, teleworking, bicycling, walking, and driving a zero-emission vehicle are all excellent ways to reduce your emissions.

When is a Spare The Air alert issued?

A Spare The Air alert is issued between May 1 – October 31, when ground-level ozone (smog) is forecast to reach or exceed an AQI of 126.

How can I be notified when a Spare The Air alert is issued?

Sign up for Air Alert! You can receive daily email air quality forecasts, including Spare The Air day information, and Spare The Air day alerts via SMS text for the Sacramento region. Sign up today at SpareTheAir.com/signup.

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What groups are more at risk for health impacts from air pollution?

Certain groups are more vulnerable to the health impacts of ground-level ozone (smog).

Sensitive populations to air pollution include:

- Children under age 14
- Adults over age 65
- Pregnant women
- Outdoor workers
- Athletes who train vigorously outdoors
- People with pulmonary or respiratory diseases, including congestive heart failure and asthma

What are the health effects of air pollution?

Air pollution affects everyone's health. When we breathe in air pollutants, they can enter our bloodstream and lead to health issues, from mild symptoms like coughing or itchy eyes to more serious conditions such as pulmonary disorders like asthma or emphysema. The risk of health effects depends on your health, the type and concentration of pollutants, and how long you're exposed.

Short-term effects:

- Increased fatigue
- Reduced resistance to infections
- Wheezing, chest pain, dry throat, headache, or nausea
- Lung damage, even after symptoms disappear
- Added stress to the heart and lungs
- Weakened athletic performance

Long-term smoke exposure can cause:

- Accelerated aging of the lungs
- Loss of lung capacity and decreased lung function
- Aggravated respiratory diseases such as asthma, bronchitis, emphysema, and possibly cancer
- Shortened life span

What is the Sacramento Federal Nonattainment Area?

The Sacramento Federal Nonattainment Area (SFNA) is an area designated by the federal government as not meeting the federal ozone standards. This designation means that the Sacramento region has air pollution levels that exceed the health-based limits for ozone, a major air pollutant. The SFNA includes all of Sacramento and Yolo counties, and portions of Placer, El Dorado, Solano, and Sutter counties.



What is the Air Quality Index (AQI)?

The AQI is a measurement that helps us understand air pollution levels and how they may impact the natural environment and human health. The higher the AQI, the greater the level of air pollution. The AQI provides an easy way to determine whether you should enjoy the outdoors as usual or consider ways to limit your exposure. The AQI includes six color-coded categories, and when forecast conditions are expected to reach 126 or higher for ground-level ozone, a Spare The Air alert is issued.

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What is the difference between SpareTheAir.com and SpareTheAir.org?

SpareTheAir.com is the website for the Sacramento region's program, while SpareTheAir.org is the website for the Bay Area Air District's program. Both programs aim to reduce overall air pollution but have different localized resources and AQI thresholds for Spare The Air alert days.

What is the difference between the air quality forecast and the current conditions?

The air quality forecast predicts the highest expected level of ground-level ozone for the day in a specific region or county, while current conditions show the ozone level at a given moment. When the forecast predicts ground-level ozone to reach 126+, a Spare The Air alert is issued to help reduce air pollution. On Spare The Air days, the highest ozone levels usually occur later in the afternoon, so current conditions may be lower than the forecast earlier in the day.

