

## Air Quality Explained

When we breathe, we take in more than just air. On some days, there may be elevated levels of air pollution, specifically ozone and particulate matter, which change the outdoor air quality. Just like the weather, our air quality is forecast every day. The daily air quality is assigned a category with a corresponding color.

Category & Color	Precautions to take
Good	Everyone: Enjoy outdoor activities.
Moderate	People extra sensitive to air pollution: Plan strenuous outdoor activities when air quality is better.
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	Sensitive groups: Cut back or reschedule strenuous outdoor activities.
Unhealthy	Everyone: Avoid strenuous outdoor activities.



## Air Pollution Action Days

When levels of ozone and/or particulate matter are expected to be elevated, an Air Pollution Action Day may be declared by meteorologists at the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. On these days, it is particularly important to take action to reduce air pollution.

## Get Your Local Air Quality Forecast

Have the air quality forecast sent directly to your inbox or mobile device! Subscribe to Illinois EnviroFlash at <http://illinois.enviroflash.info> for air quality and Air Pollution Action Day alerts. You can also visit the Partners for Clean Air website ([www.cleantheair.org](http://www.cleantheair.org)) for more information.



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## What Do YOU Know About Air Quality?



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## The Air We Breathe

Like many metropolitan areas, the Chicago area is no stranger to air pollution. That is why it is so important for residents to understand air pollution, where it comes from, how it can affect us, and, most importantly – what we can do to prevent it. This brochure was created to educate residents on air quality and the many ways they can fight air pollution in their neighborhoods.

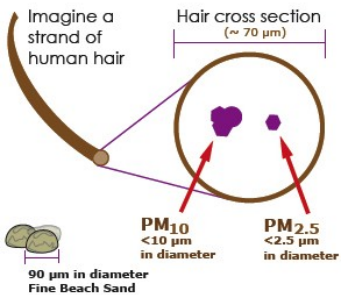


## Good Ozone vs. Bad Ozone

Ozone is good when it is high up in the atmosphere. It protects us from ultraviolet (UV) rays that can be damaging to our skin and other living organisms. Ozone is bad when it is close to the ground where we breathe. Ground-level ozone (smog) is formed when pollutants from cars and industry react when they are heated up by sunlight. High levels of ground-level ozone typically occur on hot, summer days, but can occur outside of the summer season.

## Particulate Matter

### How small is PM?



Unlike ground-level ozone, particulate matter can cause problems year-round. Particulate matter, also known as particle pollution, is made up of tiny solid particles and liquid droplets found in the air. Some particles, such as dust, dirt, soot and smoke, are visible to the human eye. Others are so small, often less than one-hundredth the width of a human hair, they can only be detected using a microscope.

## Local Air Quality & Our Health

The Chicago area does not currently meet federal health-based standards for ground-level ozone and particulate matter. When there is more air pollution in the air, this puts all of us – especially the elderly, children, people with respiratory or cardiovascular ailments, and even those who exercise outdoors – at risk. On days when particulate matter and/or ozone levels are elevated, people may notice themselves coughing, wheezing or finding it harder to breathe. But YOU can change that by taking action to help improve Chicago's air quality.



## Ways YOU Can Improve Air Quality



- Take public transit, walk, bike, car-share, or drive fuel-efficient cars.
- Avoid idling when driving and schedule errands together in order to take fewer trips.

- Turn off and unplug electronics when not in use.
- Adjust thermostats 2 degrees warmer in the summer and 2 degrees cooler in the winter.



- Purchase ENERGY STAR-rated appliances and electronics.



- Switch to compact fluorescent light bulbs.
- Purchase environmentally friendly household products.

- Switch to reusable grocery bags and water bottles.

- Use a charcoal chimney → instead of lighter fluid when grilling.



- Do not burn leaves and other yard waste.
- Do not use gas-powered lawn equipment or fire pits on Air Pollution Action Days.