

Air Quality Flag Program

Air Quality Flag PROGRAM

Know Your Air Quality
to Protect Your Health



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What is the Flag Program?

Organization raises a flag each day corresponding to the AQI (Air Quality Index)

Flag colors are based on the colors of the AQI

Organization educates the community on what the flag colors mean

Recommendations provide guidance on how to modify outdoor activities and other simple actions you can take when the air quality is unhealthy



Purpose of Program

1. Create public awareness
2. Protect children's health
3. Provide activity guidelines
4. Increase knowledge of air quality issues



What is the Air Quality Index?

Guide for reporting daily air quality

Indicates how clean or dirty the air is

Identifies health effects

Most States report Ozone and Particulate Matter for daily AQI forecast

Ozone (O₃)

Particulate Matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5})

Good

Moderate

Unhealthy for
Sensitive Groups

Unhealthy

Very Unhealthy



Air Quality Index (AQI) Colors

Air Quality Index (AQI) Values	Levels of Health Concern	Colors
<i>When the AQI is in this range:</i>	<i>...air quality conditions are:</i>	<i>...as symbolized by this color:</i>
0 to 50	Good	Green
51 to 100	Moderate	Yellow
101 to 150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	Orange
151 to 200	Unhealthy	Red
201 to 300	Very Unhealthy	Purple
301 to 500	Hazardous	Maroon

Four Easy Steps to Get Your Flag Program Started



Purchase flags



Educate and inform the school and the community



Check the daily air quality forecast and fly the corresponding flag



Follow the recommendations for schools for outdoor activities

Flags

Flags can be purchased by the PTA, a local health organization or business

Cost is approximately \$100

Order from local flag vendor or you can find flag vendors online

Set of four flags: green, yellow, orange, red

Use pennant style flags, 5 x 3 ft.

Recommend Plain flags - logos or graphics can be added, although:

Not easily seen from flag pole
Adds to the cost

EPA or your State Flag Program may have sets available



Educate and Inform

Educate and inform the community, teachers and parents

Tell your co-workers about the AQI and flag program

Recruit one or two staff champions to be the Flag Program Coordinator(s); school nurses and coaches also make great champions.

Inform the organization and surrounding community through:

Newsletters

Emails

Flyers

Blog

Local newspaper

Social media – Facebook & Twitter



Flag Program Website

www.airnow.gov/flag

Free Resources Available!

- Fact sheet (English and [Spanish](#))
- Coordinator's Handbook
- Recommendations Chart/Activity Guidelines (English and [Spanish](#))
- Press Release Template
- Sample emails to employees and school parents
- Registration Form
- Student lessons
- Teacher and student resources

Know the Air Quality Forecast Each Day



Subscribe to EnviroFlash: The air quality forecast will be sent to your email.

Free and easy to subscribe

www.airnow.gov/enviroflash

Download the free AirNow app available at






www.airnow.gov

You can customize the widget to show local air quality on your locations homepage.



Air Quality and Outdoor Activity Guidance for Schools

Regular physical activity — at least 60 minutes each day — promotes health and fitness. The table below shows when and how to modify outdoor physical activity based on the Air Quality Index. This guidance can help protect the health of all children, including teenagers, who are more sensitive than adults to air pollution. Check the air quality daily at www.airnow.gov.

Air Quality Index	Outdoor Activity Guidance
 <p>green</p> <p>GOOD</p>	Great day to be active outside!
 <p>yellow</p> <p>MODERATE</p>	<p>Good day to be active outside!</p> <p>Students who are unusually sensitive to air pollution could have symptoms, so watch for coughing or shortness of breath. These are signs to take it easier.</p>
 <p>orange</p> <p>UNHEALTHY FOR SENSITIVE GROUPS</p>	<p>It's OK for students to be active outside, especially for short activities such as recess and physical education (PE) class. For longer activities such as athletic practice, students should take more breaks and do less intense activities. Watch for symptoms such as coughing or shortness of breath.</p> <p>Students with asthma should follow their asthma action plans and keep their quick relief medicine handy.</p>
 <p>red</p> <p>UNHEALTHY</p>	<p>For <u>all</u> outdoor activities, students should take more breaks and do less intense activities. Watch for symptoms such as coughing or shortness of breath. Consider moving activities indoors or rescheduling.</p> <p>Students with asthma should follow their asthma action plans and keep their quick relief medicine handy.</p>
 <p>purple</p> <p>VERY UNHEALTHY</p>	Move all activities indoors or reschedule to another day.

Go for 60!

CDC recommends that children get 60 or more minutes of physical activity each day. www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/physicalactivity/guidelines.htm

Watch for Symptoms

Air pollution can make asthma symptoms worse and trigger attacks. Symptoms of asthma include coughing, shortness of breath, wheezing, and chest tightness. Even students who do not have asthma could experience these symptoms when exposed to unhealthy levels of air pollution.

Plan Ahead for Ozone

There is less ozone in the morning. On days when ozone is expected to be at unhealthy levels, plan outdoor activities in the morning.

Avoiding Unhealthy Exposure to Ozone & PM

Exercise has positive health benefits
Stay Active!



Know how to protect your health when the AQI is elevated

Reduce the time you are active outdoors

Schedule activity for the morning or evening when ozone levels are usually lower; or on days when PM values are lower and don't exercise near busy roadways where PM values increase

Substitute a less intense activity. For example, go for a walk instead of a jog

No matter how fit you are, adjusting the duration or level of outdoor activity at times of unhealthy AQI levels will help protect you from harmful effects

Everyday Tips to Reduce Pollution

- **Conserve energy - at home, at work, everywhere.**
- **Look for the ENERGY STAR label when buying home or office equipment.**
- **Carpool, use public transportation, bike, or walk whenever possible.**
- **Follow gasoline refueling instructions for efficient vapor recovery, being careful not to spill fuel and always tightening your gas cap securely.**
- **Consider purchasing portable gasoline containers labeled “spill-proof,” where available.**
- **Keep car, boat, and other engines properly tuned.**
- **Be sure your tires are properly inflated.**
- **Use environmentally safe paints and cleaning products when possible.**
- **Mulch or compost leaves and yard waste instead of sending to landfill**

Extra Tips During Elevated AQI Events

- Choose a cleaner commute - share a ride to work or use public transportation.
- Combine errands and reduce trips. Walk to errands when possible.
- Avoid excessive idling of your automobile.
- Refuel your car in the evening when it is cooler.
- Conserve electricity and set air conditioners no lower than 78 degrees.
- Defer lawn and gardening chores that use gasoline-powered equipment
- Reduce or eliminate fireplace and wood stove use.
- Avoid burning leaves, trash, and other materials.

More Air Quality Resources

Resources for teachers are available on the AirNow.gov website: www.airnow.gov/FLAG

Online curricula

Interactive games

Air quality simulator

Children's picture book

AirNow Learning Center

Free through the National Service Center for Environmental Publications (NSCEP) www.epa.gov/nscep



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Thanks to Sustainable Jersey for Schools, Donna Rogers, US EPA & AIRNOW