

For Immediate Release
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2003 Summer Pivotal for Air Quality

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF. June 2, 2003 As the Bay Area heads into the summer smog season, Bay Area air quality officials are figuratively holding their breath because a “clean” season could mean that the region has met the parameters for being in attainment with the federal one-hour ozone standard. “We will be watching several of our air monitoring stations very closely this summer,” said William Norton, CEO of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. “If we can hold the line at three key stations, the Bay Area has a good chance of becoming an attainment area—and one of the country’s cleanest urban areas. We need everyone’s help in reducing air pollution, every little bit counts,” Norton said.

Being a federal attainment area means cleaner air to breathe for everyone; less burdensome planning requirements and less likelihood that transit and highway funding will be frozen because of legal challenges to clean air plans. Twice in recent months – in January and October of 2002 – transportation funding was frozen in the Bay Area, potentially curtailing \$3.3 billion in projects.

High temperatures and low winds result in conditions that contribute to the production of ground level ozone. These conditions lead to unhealthy air and increased risks for residents with heart and respiratory problems.

The Spare the Air season officially begins on Monday, June 2 and runs through Friday, October 17th.

The following are ways to reduce air pollution on Spare the Air days:

- Leave your car at home. Motor vehicles are the top source of air pollution
- Carpool or use public transportation – call 511 or visit 511.org for information
- Don’t use gasoline powered garden and utility equipment
- Avoid using consumer products in aerosol spray form such as hairsprays, insecticides, deodorants and air fresheners
- Refuel your vehicles after sundown
- If you do drive, link your trips together
- Use a chimney starter to light the barbecue or use a gas barbecue
- Postpone painting projects

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Residents who are most vulnerable to air pollution include:

- asthmatics and those with respiratory and heart conditions,
- children because they are more active outdoors and their lungs are still developing,
- the elderly and
- people who exercise outdoors.

Historically, air quality in the Bay Area has shown steady improvement over the past thirty years. Last year, the Spare the Air season ended with only two excesses of the federal one-hour ozone standard in the Bay Area. However, there were seven days over the federal eight-hour standard for ozone in 2002—a measure of longer-term exposure.

“While air quality in the region has improved through the years, we are not there yet. We need everyone to pitch in and help reduce emissions on Spare the Air Days,” said Norton. “We are so close,” he added.

To sign up to receive Spare the Air notices via e-mail and for air daily air quality forecasts for the next day, visit the website www.sparetheair.org. Air quality readings and forecasts are also available by phone at 1-800-HelpAir after 4 p.m.

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