

# AIR QUALITY FLAG PROGRAM

## Newsletter

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## Air Quality Flags Used in Monterey County, California Wildfire

This past summer the Soberanes wildfire in Monterey County burned more than 132,000 acres over a three month period. Because of the canyons and valleys in the area, an atmospheric condition called a temperature inversion frequently trapped the wildfire smoke close to the ground. This resulted in greater air quality impacts to communities around the fire.

Rob Elleman from EPA Region 10 and Kathleen Stewart from EPA Region 9 served as Air Resource Advisors at the fire and used air quality flags to communicate forecasted wildfire smoke impacts to the communities of Big Sur and Carmel Valley. EPA Region 9 also sent a set of flags to the Mojave Desert Air District to help them communicate the harmful impacts of wildfire smoke to their residents.

It is the goal of EPA's Air Quality Flag Program (AQFP) and Region 9 to get flag program materials added to the toolkit of every Air Resource Advisor across the country to help communicate the harmful effects of wildfire smoke. This is a perfect fit for the flag program!



*Orange and Yellow Air Quality Flags—Soberanes Fire*

*Sun obscured by smoke*

## Current Stats

There are approximately 132,000 public and private K-12 schools educating over fifty million students in the United States. The AQFP has 860 participating schools and organizations. Since that represents less than one percent of the nation's schools, it's fair to say we have some room to grow!

We estimate the program is benefiting over one million individuals nationwide and more than half that number are students, teachers and staff. Let's work together to increase that number and protect more citizens from unhealthy air quality.

In addition to schools, we encourage all participants to invite local businesses, organizations, fire stations, health departments and museums to adopt the program.

Remember—it's critical for each new school or organization to register their program.



## EPA Region 7 and Partners Launch Flag Program in Wichita

Wichita Public School District (USD 259), EPA Region 7, Sunflower Community Action Agency (CAA), and the City of Wichita partnered to launch the Air Quality Flag Program at four Wichita Public Schools in the spring of 2016.

Sunflower CAA and USD 259 worked together to identify schools located in an area where air quality and asthma concerns have been raised and that serve high percentages of low income and minority students. In addition to their normal curriculum, the selected schools focus on health, wellness and/or the environment.

During the school district's Earth Week Celebration on April 19th, 2016, all four partners joined together at Earhart Elementary School, an environmental magnet school, to kick off the program and raise the air quality flag for the first time. During this same week, USD 259 launched the program at three other schools. USD 259, EPA, and other partners are continuing to introduce the program to additional schools within the District.



## Shout Out!

The Pennsylvania Resources Council (PRC) is working in partnership with the Group Against Smog and Pollution and the Southwestern Pennsylvania Air Quality Partnership to facilitate EPA's Air Quality Flag Program during the 2016-2017 school year. PRC is working to recruit schools – public, parochial, and private – in the ten counties included in the Southwestern Pennsylvania Air Quality Partnership. The counties include Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Lawrence, Washington, and Westmoreland.

## What's New?

### AQFP Folder Cover

We designed a cover for a two pocket folder, which can be found on the AQFP web site. It is located under the *Outreach Materials* tab.

### Invitation Letter

An invitation letter has been added to the AQFP website. You can send this letter to town governments, organizations, healthcare facilities, and non-profits to invite them to participate in the program. It is located under the *Outreach Materials* tab.

### Bookmark

An AQFP bookmark has also been added to the web site. It is located under the *Outreach Materials* tab.

[www.airnow.gov/flag](http://www.airnow.gov/flag)



### Flag Team

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