



NEWS

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Thousands of Bay Area Residents Opt to Spare the Air Survey Shows Highest Participation Ever Reported

Recent surveys show more Bay Area residents are voluntarily changing their behavior to reduce air pollution. Bay Area Air Quality Management District (Air District) surveys conducted on the evenings of September 7 and 8 showed the highest level of participation in Spare the Air activities since surveys began in 1998.

Survey results indicate that out of 5 million drivers in the Bay Area, about 360,000 drivers reduced their driving trips in some way. Thirty-seven percent of those trips (about 133,200) were reduced by linking or combining trips; 30 percent (about 108,000 trips) were eliminated altogether; and 30 percent of the reduced trips were originally for shopping. The polls commissioned by the Air District surveyed a representative sample of 829 people in the Bay Area and have a margin of error of less than 4 percent.

“I want to thank everyone in our Air District who voluntarily chose to reduce air pollution on these recent Spare the Air Days,” said Air District Executive Officer Jack Broadbent. “This is a great response – the best ever to date -- and shows that Bay Area residents care about helping everyone to breathe cleaner air.”

The survey also indicated 13 percent who normally use gas powered garden equipment chose not to because of Spare the Air or air quality concerns. Additionally, 7.2 percent indicated they drove less because of Spare the Air, and 4.2 percent indicated they did not use a product they normally would have, such as household cleaners and aerosol hairspray.

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“After a six-day period in early September when temperatures repeatedly topped 100 degrees in some areas, while we did exceed the more stringent California standard one day, our data shows the Bay Area still has not exceeded the federal ozone standards in 2004,” said Broadbent.

Public recognition of the Spare the Air program remains high, with 82 percent who say they have heard of the campaign, and 78 percent who say they have a favorable opinion of it. The Air District has been measuring participation in Spare the Air since 1998. For the past several years, about three to five percent of people surveyed reported driving less.

This is the first year that the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), BART and the Air District are offering free morning commutes on BART for the first five weekday Spare the Air days this summer. BART reported increases of nearly 16,000 additional riders on Sept. 7 and nearly 24,000 more riders on Sept. 8. Three more free BART mornings commutes may be offered if the Air District declares Spare the Air days on weekdays before the program ends October 15, 2004. Air District officials are hopeful that the highly successful incentive program may be offered again next year.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is committed to achieving clean air to protect the public's health and the environment in the San Francisco Bay region: Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, the western half of Solano and the southern half of Sonoma counties.

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