



NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Spare the Air* smog season begins May 2** ***Bay Area residents urged to leave their car at home twice a week

SAN FRANCISCO – The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is launching the 2012 *Spare the Air* smog season May 2, during Air Quality Awareness Week.

Tailpipe exhaust from the millions of cars on Bay Area roads is the largest source of smog in the Bay Area.

“Reducing the number of cars on our roads remains the biggest air quality challenge we face in the Bay Area,” said Jack Broadbent, executive officer of the Air District. “We are urging residents to re-think their commute and leave their car at home at least twice a week - take transit, work from home, carpool or bike to work instead of driving alone.”

Spare the Air Alerts are issued when ozone pollution is forecast to reach unhealthy levels. Ozone, or smog, can cause throat irritation, congestion, chest pain, trigger asthma, inflame the lining of the lungs and worsen bronchitis and emphysema. Ozone pollution is particularly harmful for young children, seniors and those with respiratory and heart conditions. When a *Spare the Air Alert* is issued, outdoor exercise should be done only in the early morning hours when ozone concentrations are lower.

Smog is formed when volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides from motor vehicle exhaust, gasoline vapors, industrial emissions and household chemicals combine with oxygen in the presence of heat and sunlight.

To kick off the *Spare the Air* season, the Air District will celebrate “Clean Air Week,” a social media event that encourages people to adopt clean air living in their everyday lives. Each day, people are encouraged to try something new to reduce their driving. On Thursday, people riding BART or AC Transit in the East Bay have a chance to spot the *Spare the Air* guy for a chance to win pre-loaded \$20 Clipper cards. Visit the *Spare the Air* Facebook page for more information.

Residents can help *Spare the Air* by carpooling, taking transit, biking or walking instead of driving alone. Visit sparetheair.org or 511.org for more information about commute alternatives.

Residents can check the daily air quality forecast by:

- Visiting sparetheair.org
- Calling the toll-free hotline 1-800-HELPAIR (435-7247)
- Signing up for email AirAlerts at sparetheair.org
- Downloading the *Spare the Air* iPhone or Android app
- Connecting with *Spare the Air* on Facebook, Twitter or Google+

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District (www.baaqmd.gov) is the regional agency chartered with protecting air quality in the Bay Area. For more information about *Spare the Air*, visit sparetheair.org.

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