



BAY AREA  
AIR QUALITY  
MANAGEMENT  
DISTRICT

# NEWS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## ***Spare the Air* summer season begins May 1** ***Bay Area commuters encouraged to find a better way to work this summer***

**SAN FRANCISCO** – The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is launching the 2014 summer *Spare the Air* season today.

The summer *Spare the Air* program encourages Bay Area residents to reduce air pollution every day by carpooling, taking transit, driving less, walking and biking. This year the Air District Board of Directors approved the new Bay Area Commuter Benefits Program rule requiring companies with 50 or more full-time employees to offer one of four commuter benefit options. For more information, see [511.org](http://511.org).

“Commuter traffic is the largest source of air pollution in the Bay Area,” said Jack Broadbent, executive officer of the Air District. “As the region’s economy improves, traffic congestion will continue to increase and air pollution levels could rise unless we take advantage of the many commute alternatives available and reduce traffic on Bay Area roads.”

The region exceeded the national and state air quality standards for ozone on Wednesday, April 30, due to the high temperatures.

The single most effective way for residents to reduce smog is to drive less. According to recent census data, more than 37 percent of Bay Area employees commute alone to work each day. Air District survey results also find that Bay Area employees are more likely to adopt alternatives to driving alone when encouraged to do so by their employer.

The *Spare the Air* summer outreach campaign encourages employers and their employees to look for ways to share, shorten or change their commutes so that they spend less time driving alone. It utilizes website addresses such as [www.discoverabetterwaytowork.com](http://www.discoverabetterwaytowork.com), and [www.yourcommuteisnowyourgym.com](http://www.yourcommuteisnowyourgym.com), to depict the quality of life benefits of sharing or simply changing the drive-alone commute. All website addresses point to [www.stacommuetips.org](http://www.stacommuetips.org) which provides aggregated commute information and tips by county.

During the summer months, *Spare the Air* health 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 limited to the early morning hours when ozone concentrations are lower.

To find out when a *Spare the Air Alert* is in effect, register for email AirAlerts at [sparetheair.org](http://sparetheair.org), call 1(800) HELP-AIR, download the *Spare the Air* App or connect with *Spare the Air* on Facebook or Twitter.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District ([www.baaqmd.gov](http://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](http://sparetheair.org).

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