



BAY AREA
AIR QUALITY
MANAGEMENT
DISTRICT

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Spare the Air* summer season begins Monday** ***Bay Area commuters encouraged to choose alternative to driving alone

SAN FRANCISCO – On Monday, April 27, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District is launching the 2015 *Spare the Air* season which focuses on reducing smog forming pollution during the warmer months.

Monday's season launch coincides with national Air Quality Awareness Week which runs through May 1. The summer *Spare the Air* program encourages Bay Area residents to reduce air pollution every day by rethinking their commute and avoiding driving alone.

"Increasingly, Bay Area roads are at a standstill with more commuter traffic which creates unhealthy smog," said Jack Broadbent, executive officer of the Air District. "Instead of sitting idle on gridlocked roads, rethink your commute. Consider a commute alternative by carpooling, taking transit, biking or walking to reduce summer air pollution, giving you time to read the news, check your email or play Candy Crush."

The single most effective way for residents to reduce smog is to drive less and the daily commute is an easy way to cut back. Air District survey results show that Bay Area employees are more likely to adopt alternatives to driving alone when encouraged to do so by their employer. Employers of 50 or more full-time employees are now required to offer 1 of 4 commuter benefit options to their employees and register at www.commuterbenefits.511.org.

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, and 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 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, 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) is the regional agency responsible for protecting air quality in the Bay Area. For more information about *Spare the Air*, visit sparetheair.org.

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