



NEWS

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Record-breaking Spare the Air season comes to an end *Most smog alerts issued in the program's 25-year history*

SAN FRANCISCO – The Bay Area's summer smog season has concluded, marking a record-breaking number of Spare the Air Alerts called during a single season.

The 2016 Spare the Air smog season called 27 alerts, beating the previous record for alerts of 25, set back in 1996. A series of heat waves and smoke from wildfires, along with ever-increasing traffic, contributed to unhealthy air quality and led to the record number of alerts. The region exceeded the federal health standard for smog 15 of those 27 days.

"The Bay Area's economy is thriving and with that comes more traffic congestion on our roads and freeways, and more transportation-related air pollution in our region," said Jack Broadbent, executive officer of the Air District. "The Bay Area has reached a tipping point - we need to carpool, take transit or telecommute to reduce air pollution, traffic gridlock and improve our quality of life."

The Spare the Air program is celebrating its 25th year of improving and increasing awareness of air quality in the Bay Area. Since 1991, the summertime program has focused on reducing ozone, or smog-forming pollution during the warmer months. Spare the Air continues to encourage all Bay Area residents to reduce air pollution every day by rethinking their commute and avoiding driving alone. The campaign also promotes carpooling, taking transit, and walking and biking whenever possible.

Transportation is the largest source of smog pollution in the Bay Area, and single occupancy vehicles are the main contributor. The Spare the Air campaign encourages Bay Area residents to look for ways to share, shorten or change their commutes to reduce smog and traffic gridlock.

During the warmer months, Spare the Air Alerts are issued when ozone pollution is forecast to reach unhealthy levels. Ozone can cause throat irritation, congestion and chest pain, triggering asthma, inflaming the lining of the lungs and worsening 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.

Bay Area employees are encouraged to check with their human resources office to learn what commuter benefits are available to them through their employer. The Bay Area Commuter Benefits program requires all employers in the Air District's jurisdiction with 50 or more full-time employees to offer commuter benefits to their workers.

To find out when a Spare the Air Alert has been called, 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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