



NEWS RELEASE

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Spare the Air smog season begins today

Employers encouraged to keep skies blue by extending teleworking options

SAN FRANCISCO - The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is announcing the start of the Spare the Air summer smog season today, Monday, May 4.

With traffic levels at record lows during the shelter-in-place, air quality has been good throughout the region. While weather conditions have had a positive effect on air quality, major reductions in traffic, the top source of pollution in the Bay Area, have also been a significant factor.

“These challenging times have demonstrated that teleworking can be a viable, flexible work option for many that benefits not only our air quality, but employers and employees as well,” said Jack Broadbent, executive officer of the Air District. “As employers create plans to safely reopen their doors and continue operations once shelter-in-place orders are eased, we should not lose sight of the benefits that reducing traffic can bring - teleworking can be part of the solution to keeping our skies blue.”

There are estimates that traffic has been reduced by 70 percent or more in the region during the shelter-in-place. **Based on a 70 percent reduction in traffic, the Air District estimates that fine particulates, or PM_{2.5}, will be reduced by 20 percent, oxides of nitrogen, or NO_x, will be reduced by 38 percent and carbon dioxide, or CO₂ emissions, will be down by 26 percent.**

Teleworking benefits include:

- Reduced traffic congestion
- Reduced commute time
- Cost savings for employers and employees
- Improved employee recruitment and retention
- Improved work-life balance
- Increased ability to effectively continue business as a part of a disaster recovery or emergency plan

The launch of the Spare the Air smog season coincides with the start of the 2020 Air Quality Awareness Week, a nationwide campaign to increase air quality awareness and inspire people to take steps to reduce their contribution to air pollution.

During the warmer weather months, Spare the Air Alerts are issued when smog, or ozone pollution, is forecast to reach unhealthy levels. Ozone can cause throat irritation, congestion and chest pain. It can 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 called, limit outdoor exercise in the late afternoon when ozone concentrations are highest.

Know when a Spare the Air Alert is in effect:

- Via text alerts by texting the word “START” to 817-57
- By connecting with Spare the Air on Facebook or Twitter
- On the www.sparetheair.org website
- By calling 1(800) HELP-AIR
- By signing up for email AirAlerts at www.sparetheair.org
- By downloading the Spare the Air iPhone or Android App

The [Bay Area Air Quality Management District](#) is the regional agency responsible for protecting air quality in the nine-county Bay Area. Connect with the Air District via [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [YouTube](#).

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