Air Quality

Improve Air Quality Levels

Air quality in Minneapolis is among the best of major metropolitan areas in the United States. Still, the area has air quality issues that contribute to health problems such as asthma, pulmonary disease and heart disease. Most air pollution comes from the use of fossil fuels.

Target

- Reduce moderately unhealthy days in Minneapolis to fewer than 35 per year by 2015, with more reductions after that.
- Reduce all monitored air toxins to healthy levels by 2015.

Trend Analysis

The number of "moderately unhealthy" days increased by 23% from 2005 (80 days) compared to 2006 (98 days). At the same time, the number of days that had even worse air quality decreased from 4 days in 2005 to 0 days in 2006.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency found the yearly average benzene levels to be within the health benchmarks for 2006. But the Minneapolis Air Quality Study, which measures pollutants at ground level, found benzene and tetrachloroethylene levels outside of health standards in some locations. Formaldehyde has exceeded health benchmarks in previous years, but 2006 data are not yet available.

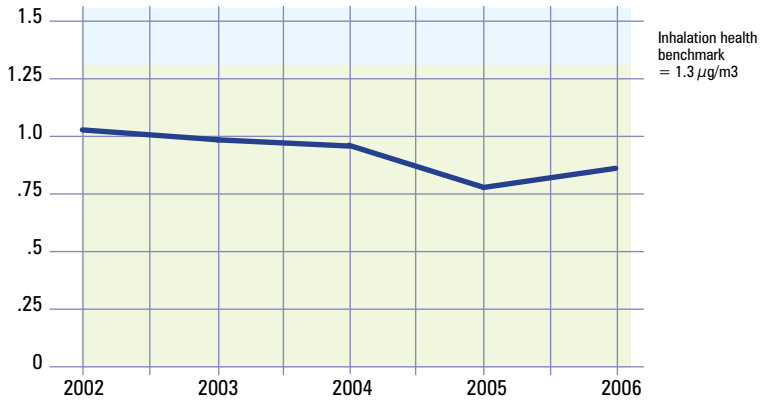
Air Quality Index for Minneapolis

Year	Good days	Moderately unhealthy days	Unhealthy for sensitive groups days	Unhealthy days
2003	289	75	1	0
2004	297	66	2	0
2005	281	80	3	1
2006	267	98	0	0

Source: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Average benzene concentrations at monitoring stations in Minneapolis

in μg/m3



Source: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Ambient average levels of benzene in the air have been below health benchmarks and have declined overall since 2002.

Recent City Activities

- Purchased three new hybrid-electric, for a total of eight hybrids including two for the Library Board.
- Removed *No Turn on Red* signs at 40 intersections, reducing idling times and vehicle emissions. www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/traffic/NTOR.asp
- Banned the purchase and sale of mercury in thermostats and medical devices and for use in schools. Required crematoria to report mercury emissions. Mercury vapor is a potent nerve toxin that can be inhaled directly. Because mercury also can settle into lakes and rivers, it can be ingested by eating fish.
- The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board is providing cleaner air and a quieter environment in Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden by replacing a gas tractor with an electric battery tractor.
- Metro Transit announced it will replace 314 buses with 150 next-generation hybrid electric buses that deliver 22 percent better fuel mileage and half the exhaust soot of the existing fleet.
- See related activities under Renewable Energy, Global Warming, Downtown Transportation Alternatives, Bike Lanes and Tree Canopy.

Web Links & Resources

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Air Quality
www.pca.state.mn.us/air/index.html

City of Minneapolis, Air Quality
www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/airquality

Minnesota Department of Health, Air Quality
www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/air/index.htm