

Final Updates to the Air Quality Index (AQI) for Particulate Matter

Fact Sheet and Common Questions

Summary

- On February 7, 2024, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced a final rule to strengthen the nation's National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for fine particle pollution, also known as fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) or soot. EPA is setting the level of the primary (health-based) annual PM_{2.5} standard at 9.0 micrograms per cubic meter (µg/m³) to provide increased public health protection, consistent with the available health Science.
- In addition, after considering public comments, EPA is changing some breakpoints in the U.S. [Air Quality Index \(AQI\)](#) to reflect the revised level of the primary annual PM_{2.5} standard and to reflect recent health science on PM_{2.5}. The AQI is EPA's color-coded tool for communicating air quality to the public.
- EPA is also updating AQI reporting requirements to reflect current reporting practices.
- EPA sets AQIs for the following common pollutants: particulate matter (also called particle pollution, soot, or PM), ozone, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, and sulfur dioxide.
- The AQI updates will become effective May 6, 2024. EPA will update its tools for communicating the AQI to reflect the changes. This includes the [AirNow](#) website.

What's New in the AQI for PM

- The table below shows the previous and updated AQI for particle pollution. EPA bases each category on a range of particle pollution concentrations in the air. The Agency measures particle pollution in micrograms per cubic meter of air. Sometimes, you will see micrograms per cubic meter written as "µg/m³."
- The table on the next page shows the color code and index values for each category. EPA converts pollution concentrations to index values to make AQI categories consistent across pollutants. Together, the category color and the index values help you quickly know what your air quality is like.

2024 Air Quality for Fine Particle Pollution

SSIS Air Quality Breakpoints ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)	Approximate AQI Value	Health Implications	SSIS Response
0.0 to 9.0	(0-50) Good		
9.0 to 35.4	(51-100) Moderate	Some pollutants may slightly affect very few hypersensitive individuals.	
35.5 to 55.4	(101- 150) Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	Healthy people may experience slight irritations and sensitive individuals will be slightly affected to a larger extent.	Administrative Alert - Consider additional breaks during intense activities
55.5 to 125.4	(151-200) Unhealthy	Sensitive individuals will experience more serious conditions. The hearts and respiratory systems of healthy people may be affected.	Administrative Review - Outdoor activities are limited or modified to reduce the intensity
125.5 to 225.4	(201-300) Very Unhealthy	Everyone will be significantly affected and will experience a noticeable reduced or decline in endurance during activities.	Administrative ReNo Health Implications View - At or above 225, outdoor activities are moved indoors or canceled. Tournaments are modified.
225.5 +	(301+) Hazardous		