

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**2014 AIR QUALITY FORECASTING SEASON KICKS OFF AMID REPORTS THAT**

**ST. LOUIS REMAINS AMONG THE MOST POLLUTED CITIES IN THE NATION**

***Latest State of the Air Report reveals the St. Louis region has climbed from 25th to 13th in the nation for ozone pollution and now ranks 8th in the nation for year-round particle pollution***

**ST. LOUIS, MO., May 1, 2014 . . .** With air quality forecasting officially beginning today for the 2014 summer season, the St. Louis region is facing more grim news regarding its air quality. According to the American Lung Association’s latest State of the Air Report, released yesterday, the St. Louis area is now ranked 13th out of 217 metropolitan areas in the nation for ozone pollution, which is the main component of smog. The report also shows that particle pollution continues to be a problem for the region, which now ranks 8th in the nation for year-round particles. This news comes as the region prepares to settle into the sizzling summer months when air quality conditions are typically at their worst, prompting the St. Louis Regional Clean Air Partnership to ramp up its efforts to encourage area residents to keep an eye on the daily forecast to protect their health and do their part to help clear the air to reverse these troubling trends.

“Once again, the State of Air Report has confirmed what a critical concern air pollution continues to be for the St. Louis region,” said Susannah Fuchs, Senior Director of Environmental Health for the American Lung Association of the Plains-Gulf Region and spokesperson for the Clean Air Partnership. “We want people to know that, while particle and ozone pollution are especially harmful to children, the elderly and the many individuals who suffer from respiratory disease, each and every one of us can see negative health effects from poor air quality. That’s why it’s so important for area residents to do their share to help ensure that air quality conditions remain in the healthy range this summer and year-round.”

With transportation having the most profound impact on air quality, making the choice to drive less is an easy way to help reduce the emissions that lead to poor air quality. Actions like using transit, carpooling and vanpooling, combining errands into a single trip, telecommuting and walking and biking more to get around town help take cars off area roads and the related emissions out of our air. These actions are especially critical when poor air conditions are in the forecast. In addition, the many green lifestyle changes we choose to make can also positively impact air quality and improve lung health in the region. These changes include efforts to conserve energy, recycle, reduce waste and reuse items.

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**Air quality forecasting kicks off for 2014 season**

**First and Final Add**

As air quality forecasting gets underway for 2014, area residents are encouraged to visit the Clean Air Partnership’s website at [www.cleanair-stlouis.com](http://www.cleanair-stlouis.com) and sign up to receive the daily forecast in their email inboxes via the Environmental Protection Agency’s EnviroFlash air quality alert system. Individuals can also find the forecast on the Clean Air Partnership’s Facebook page or follow the organization on Twitter @gatewaycleanair for daily updates.

“While the latest State of the Air results continue to be disappointing for the St. Louis region, we hope that the news will help drive home how important it is for area residents to stay up-to-date on air quality conditions this summer and encourage the public to get engaged in the clean air effort by taking steps to reduce emissions so the region can breathe easier,” said Fuchs.

To learn more about the health effects of poor air quality and steps you can take to help clear the air, log on to [www.cleanair-stlouis.com](http://www.cleanair-stlouis.com). To access the American Lung Association’s 2014 State of the Air report, visit [www.stateoftheair.org](http://www.stateoftheair.org).

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***About the State of the Air Report***

*The American Lung Association’s “State of the Air 2014” report is an annual, national air quality “report card.” The 2014 report—the 15th annual release—uses the most recent quality assured air pollution data, compiled by the EPA, in 2010, 2011 and 2012. The data comes from the official monitors for the two most widespread types of pollution, ozone (smog) and particle pollution (PM 2.5, also known as soot). The report grades counties and ranks cities and counties based on their scores for ozone, year-round particle pollution and short-term particle pollution levels.*

***About the St. Louis Regional Clean Air Partnership***

*The St. Louis Regional Clean Air Partnership was formed in 1995, led by the American Lung Association, St. Louis Regional Chamber and Growth Association, East-West Gateway Council of Governments, Washington University and others, to increase awareness of regional air quality issues and to encourage activities to reduce air pollution emissions.*