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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**2016 AIR QUALITY FORECASTING SEASON GETTING UNDERWAY AMID THE IMPLEMENTATION OF STRICTER OZONE STANDARDS AND MORE DISMAL STATE OF THE AIR NEWS**

***Latest State of the Air Report reveals failing grades in the St. Louis region for ozone pollution***

**ST. LOUIS, MO., May 2, 2016 . . .** With summer air quality forecasting getting underway today, the St. Louis region remains one of the top-ranked cities in the nation for air pollution, according the American Lung Association’s latest State of the Air Report, released April 20. Specifically, the report highlighted failing grades for the St. Louis area for ozone pollution. And following the EPA’s adoption of stricter National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ground-level ozone standards last fall, the St. Louis area is bracing itself for a summer season that has the potential to bring more poor air quality days than in recent years.

According to the American Lung Association’s latest State of the Air Report, the St. Louis area is now the 18th most polluted metropolitan area in the nation for ozone pollution, which is the main component of smog. This news comes as the region prepares to settle into its first summer season highlighted by stricter ozone standards of 70 parts per billion (ppb), down from the previous standard of 75 ppb.

On Oct. 1, 2015, the EPA strengthened the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for ground-level ozone based on extensive scientific evidence about the effects of ozone on public health and welfare. The updated standards are designed to further improve public health, particularly for at-risk groups, including children, older adults, people of all ages who have lung diseases such as asthma, and those who are active outdoors.

With the updated standards in effect, the Clean Air Partnership is ramping up its efforts to encourage area residents to keep an eye on the daily forecast to protect their health, and to do their part to help reduce emissions in order to keep air quality in the healthy range.

“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, Director, Clean Air, for the American Lung Association in Missouri and spokesperson for the Clean Air Partnership. “With the EPA’s stricter ozone standards now in effect, our area has the potential to see many more orange and red poor air quality days this season. While weather conditions play a big role in our air quality, there are many things we can all do to reduce emissions, and those efforts are going to be very important during the 2016 air quality forecasting season.”

With transportation having the most profound impact on air quality, making the choice to spend less time behind the wheel is an easy way to help reduce the emissions that lead to poor air quality. Actions like using transit, carpooling and vanpooling, choosing not to idle your vehicle, combining errands into a single trip, telecommuting and walking and biking more to get around town all help take cars off area roads and the related emissions out of our air. These actions are especially critical when poor air quality conditions are in the forecast. In addition, there are many eco-friendly lifestyle changes we make to further 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 2016 season**

**First and final Add**

As air quality forecasting gets underway for 2016, area residents are encouraged to visit the Clean Air Partnership’s website at [www.cleanair-stlouis.com](http://www.cleanair-stlouis.com), which features a wealth of air quality information and tips to help area residents do their share for cleaner air. While on the site, individuals can also 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 additional air quality information and the daily forecast on the Clean Air Partnership’s Facebook page, or follow the organization on Twitter @gatewaycleanair for daily updates.

“We want people to know that, while air pollution is 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,” noted Fuchs. “With the region receiving more grim news about the state of our air and with the area facing stricter ozone standards, we hope area residents see how important it is for them to get engaged in the clean air effort by taking steps to reduce emissions so the region can breathe easier.”

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 2016 State of the Air report, visit [www.stateoftheair.org](http://www.stateoftheair.org). For more information on the EPAs stricter ozone standards, visit

<https://www.epa.gov/ozone-pollution>.

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***About the American Lung Association***

The American Lung Association is the leading organization working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease, through research, education and advocacy. The work of the American Lung Association is focused on four strategic imperatives: to defeat lung cancer; to improve the air we breathe; to reduce the burden of lung disease on individuals and their families; and to eliminate tobacco use and tobacco-related diseases. For more information about the American Lung Association, a holder of the Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Guide Seal, or to support the work it does, call 1-800-LUNGUSA (1-800-586-4872) or visit: Lung.org.

***About the Clean Air Partnership***

The 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.