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**CLEAN AIR PARTNERSHIP URGES AREA RESIDENTS TO TAKE ACTION FOR CLEANER AIR AMID RETURN OF THE 2019 AIR QUALITY FORECASTING SEASON AND “STATE OF THE AIR” RESULTS**

*St. Louis escapes top 25 most polluted cities list for third consecutive year, but still receives bad grades for air quality*

**ST. LOUIS, MO., May 3, 2019 . . .** Just in time for daily air quality forecasting to make its return for the 2019 season, the American Lung Association’s 2019 “State of the Air” report was released, revealing that the St. Louis region has once again escaped being ranked among the top 25 most-polluted cities in the U.S. However, ozone pollution levels still indicate there are concerns for air pollution in the St. Louis area and nationwide, and The Clean Air Partnership is reminding area residents of the importance of staying informed about the quality of air we breathe, whether it is in a healthy “green” range, unhealthy “red” range, or somewhere in between.

The number of people exposed to unhealthy air increased to nearly 141.1 million, rising from the 133.9 million in the years covered by the 2018 report (2014-2016). Since many counties in the St. Louis metro area still had multiple days when the air quality was unhealthy, that means there is still much work to be done to protect our local communities from the growing risks to public health resulting from increased levels of ozone and particle pollution.

Far too many cities across the nation saw an increased number of days when ground-level ozone reached unhealthy levels and particle pollution soared to often record-breaking levels in some areas. Altogether, 43.3 percent of the population is exposed to unhealthy levels of air pollution, and while we may not be among the most polluted cities in this year’s ‘State of the Air’ ranking, poor air quality remains a problem that affects everyone in the St. Louis area. Here’s a look at the latest rankings for ozone pollution across the region for counties in the non-attainment area included in the ALA report:

**Missouri Illinois**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Jefferson | C | Jersey | D |
| St. Charles | F | Madison | F |
| St. Louis County | F | St. Clair | C |
| St. Louis City | C |  |  |

The report also reveals that as climate change continues, cleaning up these pollutants will become ever more challenging, ultimately making it harder to protect human health. Increased heat in 2017, the third warmest year on record in the U.S., likely drove this increase in ozone as warmer temperatures stimulate the reactions in the atmosphere that cause ozone to form.

“As we prepare to settle into summer when we’re at greater risk for higher levels of ozone pollution in our region, it’s important to keep in mind children, older adults and those who suffer from lung diseases that make them especially vulnerable to poor air quality,” said Susannah Fuchs, Director, Clean Air for the American Lung Association in Missouri. “While the fight to clean up the air we breathe continues, we encourage area residents to remain steadfast in their efforts to take voluntary steps to reduce emissions because those actions play a critical role in improving air quality conditions and lung health of our region.”

As the daily air quality forecasts resume, so does the Clean Air Partnership’s seasonal outreach to educate St. Louis residents on the health effects of air pollution and the steps they can take to keep air quality in healthy ranges. With transportation-related emissions being one of the biggest contributors to air pollution, actions like taking transit, carpooling, vanpooling, telecommuting, avoiding idling our vehicles and combining errands into a single trip can help reduce emissions when poor air quality is forecasted. The importance of keeping the region’s air clean is at an all-time high, especially during the peak of summer when air quality conditions can be at their worst.

The region’s public transit system is designed so riders can walk to a nearby stop or park and take transit to get where they’re going – safely, comfortably and conveniently. [Citizens for Modern Transit](http://www.cmt-stl.org) offers a Guaranteed Ride Home program as an incentive for commuters that allows employees to take [Metro Transit](http://www.metrostlouis.org)/bicycle while providing them a “safety net” where they can get home and not be left at work if a situation arises. For individuals whose schedules or work locations prevent them from utilizing public transit, [RideFinders](http://www.ridefinders.org) proudly serves the St. Louis region with a mission to improve air quality and reduce traffic congestion by encouraging alternate transportation options. The organization offers a path to reduce emissions by providing a free carpool and vanpool ride matching service for commuters to help improve the overall quality of the air, working with employers, colleges, trade schools, municipalities and virtually any other type of organization to help commuters get to and from work and school. RideFinders also has a Guaranteed Ride Home Program for ridesharing commuters of participating organizations, and for Madison County Transit’s Express bus passengers.

Additionally, there are many other eco-friendly lifestyle changes for St. Louisans to consider 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.

Area residents are encouraged to visit the Clean Air Partnership’s website at [www.cleanair-stlouis.com](http://www.cleanair-stlouis.com), where they can find a wealth of information on the health effects of poor air quality, tips for doing their share for cleaner air and contact the Clean Air Partnership with interest in receiving their monthly newsletter. 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. Additional air quality information and the daily forecast can be accessed by liking the Clean Air Partnership on Facebook, or by following the organization on Twitter @gatewaycleanair. To access the American Lung Association’s 2019 “State of the Air” report, visit [www.lung.org](http://www.lung.org).

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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.*