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**For more information, contact:**

Julie Hauser Susannah Fuchs

The Hauser Group American Lung Association in Missouri

314.436.9090 314.449.9149

**2018 AIR QUALITY FORECASTING SEASON KICKS OFF AS LATEST “STATE OF THE AIR” REPORT REVEALS ST. LOUIS REGION STILL RECEIVES POOR GRADES FOR AIR QUALITY**

*Region may no longer be among top 25 most polluted cities, but ozone pollution levels still indicate air pollution concerns in the St. Louis area and nationwide, with more than 40 percent of Americans living with unhealthy air*

**ST. LOUIS, MO., May 1, 2018 . . .** May 1st marks the return of daily air quality forecasting by the Clean Air Partnership to keep area residents informed as to whether the air we breathe is in a healthy “green” range, unhealthy “red” range, or somewhere in between.If the latest data from the American Lung Association’s (ALA) recently released 2018 “State of the Air” report is any indication of what to expect this year, the region once again needs to be prepared for a mix of conditions and the potential for many days of unhealthy ozone levels.

For the second consecutive year, the St. Louis region escaped being ranked among the top 25 most-polluted cities in the U.S., so there was some good news in the report. Unfortunately, while last year’s drop off the list was part of an overall trend in improved air quality nationwide, that is not the case with the most recent findings. The latest data reveals several counties in the St. Louis metro area still had multiple days when the air quality was unhealthy, especially for sensitive populations, and they weren’t alone.

Many cities across the nation experienced more days when ground level ozone reached unhealthy levels during the period measured by the report, a concerning trend attributed to record setting heat. The number of people nationwide exposed to unhealthy levels of air pollution increased to almost 134 million people, higher than the 125 million in the years covered by the 2017 report (2013 -2015). In all, more than 4 in 10 Americans are still living with unhealthy air, and residents of the St. Louis region are among them. 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 | D | Jersey | D |
| St. Charles | F | Madison | F |
| St. Louis County | F | St. Clair | C |
| St. Louis City | C |  |  |

“While it’s encouraging that the St. Louis region stayed off the list of the 25 most-polluted cities in the annual ‘State of the Air’ report, the raw numbers clearly show we’re far from a clean bill of health for our region,” stated Susannah Fuchs, Director, Clean Air for the American Lung Association in Missouri. “We urge area residents to continue to take concrete steps to reduce emissions, as these voluntary actions contribute to improved air quality conditions and better lung health for those living in the bi-state area.”

As the Clean Air Partnership resumes its daily air quality forecasts, it is also ramping up seasonal outreach to educate St. Louis residents on the health effects of air pollution and steps to keep air quality in the healthy range, which especially important for children, the elderly and the many individuals who suffer from respiratory disease. While weather conditions play a significant role in the region’s daily air quality, the transportation choices people make also have a significant effect on air quality and the health of the region. Whether it’s using transit or carpooling for the work or school commute, walking or biking more, combining errands into a single trip, or avoiding idling our vehicles, simple steps can greatly impact the amount of ozone-forming emissions generated on any given day. These ozone reducing practices are particularly important during the heat of summer when air quality conditions can be at their worst.

For those whose schedules or work locations prevent a more environmentally friendly commute, there are many other eco-friendly lifestyle changes they can 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.

“Poor air quality is a problem that affects everyone in the St. Louis area, but it’s impact on those who are more sensitive to ozone pollution is particularly worrisome,” noted Fuchs. “It’s important to keep these vulnerable individuals in mind and take action for cleaner air during the coming months when we’re at greater risk for higher levels of ozone pollution in our region.”

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 air quality, the health effects of poor air quality, and tips for doing 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. 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 2018 “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.