

Even Wisconsin has days when the air quality is unhealthy. Becoming familiar with a national tool called the Air Quality Index (AQI) is vital for all Wisconsinites, especially those who are sensitive to the harmful effects of poor air quality.



The AQI is an index developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that links colors to numbers. The higher the number the worse the air quality and associated health effects. And just like a stop light, green is good (safe to proceed with your normal routine) and red means stop (slow down, take it easy).

The AQI system relays messages through the National Weather Service, making it easy for the public to receive and understand the messages. The system includes other ways for the public to access air quality information as well. Now when you hear the terms **Air Quality Watch** or **Air Quality Advisory** you'll know to proceed with caution.



Air Quality Index Levels of Health Concern	Numerical Value	Meaning
Good	0-50	Air quality is considered satisfactory and air pollution poses little or no risk.
Moderate	51-100	Air quality is acceptable; however, for some pollutants there may be a moderate health concern for a very small number of people who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	101-150	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is not likely to be affected.
Unhealthy	151-200	Everyone may begin to experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
Very Unhealthy	201-300	Health alert: everyone may experience more serious health effects.



For More Information . . .

DNR Air Quality Watch and Air Quality Advisory program, call 1-866-324-5924 (press 0 to talk to a staff person), or log onto: <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/aw/air/>

Air quality in your area, log onto: <http://maps.dnr.state.wi.us/imf/dnrimf.jsp?site=wisards>, or call the Air Quality Hotline at: 1-866-DAILY-AIR (1-866-324-5924)

Air Quality Index, log onto: <http://www.airnow.gov/index.cfm?action=static.aqi>

What's an Air Quality Watch?

What goes from . . .



. . . at any given moment causing us to either slow down or keep moving forward? The answer is not a stop light, but rather air quality.

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What is an Air Quality Watch?

- The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) issues an **Air Quality Watch** when pollutant levels are **forecast** to be in the orange Air Quality Index range (unhealthy for sensitive groups).
- The Watch will be used year-round for fine particle pollution and seasonally for ozone pollution during warmer months.
- The Watch will be issued by 12 noon the day before pollution levels are expected to reach unhealthy levels. This helps the public be aware of imminent air quality problems so individuals and businesses are able to plan for the following day.
- Each Watch message will specify:
 - ◆ the Watch's length of time
 - ◆ the geographic area affected
 - ◆ the pollutant of concern
- The Watch message will also include health messages for those who are sensitive to air pollution and actions people can take to reduce air emissions.



What is an Air Quality Advisory?

- The DNR issues an **Air Quality Advisory** when air pollutant levels have **reached or exceeded** the orange Air Quality Index range (unhealthy for sensitive groups) and are expected to remain at that level for at least several hours.
- Each Advisory message will specify:
 - ◆ the Advisory's length of time
 - ◆ the geographic area affected
 - ◆ the pollutant of concern
- The Advisory message will also include health messages for those who are sensitive to air pollution.

Who is included in the "unhealthy for sensitive groups" category?

Air Quality Index Levels of Health Concern
Good
Moderate
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups
Unhealthy
Very Unhealthy

Some people are more sensitive to air pollution than others. **Everyone** should consider his or her health and susceptibility to air pollution before spending time outdoors on days with an **Air Quality Watch** or **Advisory**.

The Air Quality Index – **Orange** color range indicates the air quality is "unhealthy for sensitive groups," including:

- People with cardiac or respiratory disease
- People with asthma
- Older adults
- Children
- People performing strenuous activity outdoors, and
- Individuals exposed to air pollution for extended periods of time.

If you are included in this group, limit your time outdoors on days with an **Air Quality Watch** or **Advisory**. Other individuals might not feel an impact until the AQI reaches the **red** range.



How will the public know if an Air Quality Watch or Advisory is called?

Air Quality Watches and Advisories are announced via:

1. **DNR Air Quality Hotline** – Call toll free, 1-866-DAILY-AIR (1-866-324-5924). This hotline provides information on air quality.

2. **DNR Air Quality Listserv** – This system sends out a message via e-mail to all subscribers when an **Air Quality Watch** or **Advisory** is called. To sign up for this DNR listserv please log onto: dnr.wi.gov/org/aw/air/health/listserv.html

3. **DNR web pages** – The DNR home page (<http://dnr.wi.gov/>) will post a notice of an **Air Quality Watch** or **Advisory** as will the Air Management web pages (<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/aw/air/>).

4. **National Weather Service and Local Media** – Watch for local media announcements of **Air Quality Watches** or **Advisories** provided by the National Weather Service's Weather Wire.



You can help reduce air pollution emissions on days when an **Air Quality Watch** or **Advisory** is called by **doing simple things**:

- **Reduce Driving.** Plan your trips before you go, carpool, take mass transit, or delay any unnecessary trips for another day.
- **Do not let your engine idle.** Turn off your vehicle if you plan to idle more than 30 seconds.
- **Postpone vehicle refueling.** Refuel in the evening and always tighten your gas cap.
- **Avoid outdoor burning.**
- **Postpone using outdoor gas- or diesel-powered equipment.** Wait to use motorboats, lawnmowers or leaf-blowers.
- **Conserve energy.** Turn off lights and appliances not in use and hang-dry laundry.

