

American Lung Association: New reports shows mixed results for Milwaukee's air quality, residents exposed to less ozone yet more particulate matter pollution

Posted on Thursday, Apr 21, 2022

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Lung Association "State of the Air" Report reveals that residents continued to face days of poor air quality

MILWAUKEE (April 20, 2022) -The 2022 "[State of the Air](#)" report, released today by the American Lung Association, finds that Milwaukee's rankings were mixed for some of the most harmful and widespread types of air pollution: particle pollution and ozone. Milwaukee was ranked #26 in the country as most polluted for ozone, a slightly better grade than last year at #24.

"The levels of ozone and particle pollution seen in Milwaukee can harm the health of all of our residents, but particularly at risk are children, older adults, pregnant people and those living with chronic disease," said Molly Collins, advocacy director for the Lung Association. "Both ozone and particle pollution can cause premature death and other serious health effects such as asthma attacks, cardiovascular damage, and developmental and reproductive harm. Particle pollution can also cause lung cancer. Fortunately, the area did see an improvement in the levels of short-term particle pollution."

The “State of the Air” report is the Lung Association’s annual air quality “report card” that tracks and grades Americans’ exposure to unhealthy levels of ground-level ozone air pollution (also known as smog), annual particle pollution (also known as soot), and short-term spikes in particle pollution, over a three-year period. This year’s report covers 2018-2020.

Ground-level Ozone Pollution in Milwaukee

Compared to the 2021 report, Milwaukee experienced fewer unhealthy days of high ozone in this year’s report. The metro area reduced its unhealthy ozone days in 2018-2020 and is no longer on the Top 25 ranking as most polluted by ozone in the nation. “State of the Air” ranked Milwaukee as the 26th most polluted city for ozone pollution, which is slightly better than its ranking in last year’s report. However, the area still received an “F” grade for ozone pollution.

Particle Pollution in Milwaukee

The report also tracked short-term spikes in particle pollution, which can be extremely dangerous and even lethal. Milwaukee’s short-term particle pollution was improved in this year’s report, and there were no unhealthy days. Improvement in short term particles puts the area on the cleanest cities list. The 2022 “State of the Air” found that year-round particle pollution levels in Milwaukee were higher than in last year’s report. This year, Milwaukee was ranked #56 most polluted for year-round particle levels— a worse ranking than last year at #74.

The report found that nationwide, nearly 9 million more people were impacted by deadly particle pollution than reported last year. It also shows more days with “very unhealthy” and “hazardous” air quality than ever before in the two-decade history of this report. Overall, more than 137 million Americans live in counties that had unhealthy levels of ozone or particle pollution. Communities of color are disproportionately exposed to unhealthy air. The report found that people of color were 61% more likely than white people to live in a county with a failing grade for at least one pollutant, and 3.6 times as likely to live in a county with a failing grade for all three pollutants.

The addition of 2020 data to the 2022 “State of the Air” report gives a first look at air quality trends during the COVID-19 pandemic. Regardless of the shutdowns in early 2020, there was no obvious improvement.

The Lung Association is calling on the Biden administration to strengthen the national limits on both short-term and year-round particulate matter air pollution. Stronger standards will educate the public about air pollution levels that threaten

their health and drive the cleanup of polluting sources in communities across the country. See the full report results and sign the petition at Lung.org/SOTA.