

For Immediate Release

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Iowans Urged to be Air Aware

Iowans and others across the nation are being urged, by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), to “Be Air Aware,” in observance of the 40th anniversary of the Clean Air Act and Air Quality Awareness Week, May 3-7.

Since the federal Clean Air Act was passed in 1970, changes have been made in the design of cars and trucks to reduce emissions such as carbon monoxide, lead, and organic compounds. Also this federal law resulted in the reduction and regulation of major pollutants from industry, notably regulation of pollutants from coal combustion used to generate electricity for homes, businesses and municipalities. The last forty years have seen considerable progress toward cleaner air, especially in large urban areas.

However, be aware there are still regions and cities in Iowa that have excessive concentrations of some air pollutants. A recent report released by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), *2010 State of the Environment*, points out that from 2007-2009 fine particle pollution levels exceeded public health thresholds 125 times at sites across Iowa--up 33% from the previous reporting period. Several areas in eastern Iowa have been declared, at times, to be in non-attainment of EPA air quality standards for fine particle pollution. Should these conditions persist, there are significant consequences for human health and economic development in the affected communities.

According to the IDNR report...

In Iowa, most fine particle pollution forms in the atmosphere when ammonia (from animal feeding operations, fertilizer application and other natural sources) combines with sulfuric or nitric acid (from power plants, automobiles and other combustion sources) to create tiny particles. Smoke also sends fine particles directly into the air.

In addition to fine particle pollution, some 187 chemicals are listed by the EPA as hazardous air pollutants, and are regulated because of their toxicity for humans. There is also evidence that these pollutants can harm plants and wildlife. With the continued intensification of row cropping

and livestock feeding in Iowa, questions about emissions of ammonia and other air pollutants from these activities should be addressed by state regulators.

“The DNR’s report notes that agricultural practices contribute to air quality concerns in Iowa. This means that agribusinesses must join state regulators, other Iowa industries and Iowa municipalities in taking responsibility for creating and adopting solutions,” said Lee Searles, Air Quality Program Director for the Iowa Environmental Council, a non-profit environmental policy group.

Searles says he’d like all Iowans to become better informed about Iowa air quality issues and let state and local leaders know they want Iowa air to be the healthiest possible.

More information about air pollution in Iowa is available at the Iowa Environmental Council’s website at iaenvironment.org.

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About the Iowa Environmental Council

The Iowa Environmental Council is a non-profit organization, actively working in public policy to provide a safe, healthy environment for all Iowans. The Council focuses on public education and coalition building to give Iowans a voice on issues that affect their quality of life and to protect Iowa's natural resources for current and future generations. For more information contact the Iowa Environmental Council or visit www.iaenvironment.org.
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