

**Wednesday, April 27, 2016
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact: Sacramento Metropolitan AQMD Communications Office
916-874-4888**

**Lower Federal Smog Standard
Means More Orange and Red AQI Days this Spare The Air Season**

SACRAMENTO, Calif. -- May 1 is the start of the Sacramento region's 22nd annual Spare The Air season to educate the public about the health effects of air pollution and encourage residents to drive less when a Spare The Air alert is issued.

This summer, residents of the Sacramento region can expect to see more Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups (orange) days and Unhealthy (red) days on the Air Quality Index (AQI) due to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (U.S. EPA) new lower federal ozone health standard. Air pollution isn't increasing, but health studies have shown that ozone pollution is harmful at even lower levels, and in response the U.S. EPA strengthened its ozone standard from 0.075 to 0.070 parts per million. The AQI was adjusted to correlate with the new standard, and a Sacramento region Spare The Air alert will now be issued when ozone pollution is forecast to meet or exceed 126 AQI.

The nation's AQI is an index for reporting daily air quality. It keeps the public informed about how clean or polluted the air is in their communities and what associated health effects might be a concern. The color-coded chart has six categories: Good (green), Moderate (yellow), Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups (orange), Unhealthy (red), Very Unhealthy (purple), and Hazardous (maroon).

Sacramento residents are urged to pay attention to the daily AQI by downloading the free Sacramento Region Air Quality app. It's available in iOS, Android and Windows app stores. Users will get the daily air quality forecast, current air pollution readings for Sacramento, Placer, Yolo-Solano and El Dorado counties, as well as Spare The Air alerts and wildfire smoke advisories when issued.

Follow these tips to reduce air pollution and protect your health this summer:

- Cut back on driving – postpone at least one trip, especially on a Spare The Air day
- Garden green – avoid using gas-powered lawn mowers, leaf blowers and other garden equipment
- Link your errands into one big trip to lower pollution by reducing cold starts of your car engine
- Work from home – get employer permission in advance, ask now
- Bring your lunch to work
- Use an electric starter or chimney briquette starter instead of charcoal lighter fluid to start your barbecue
- Postpone outings on gas or diesel-powered boats, trail bikes or all-terrain vehicles because they are high pollution sources
- Take public transit, walk or bike for commute, errands and recreation

Visit www.SpareTheAir.com, follow on Twitter at [Twitter.com/AQMD](https://twitter.com/AQMD) or “like” Scooter, the Spare The Air mascot, at [Facebook.com/ScooterTheSpareTheAirDog](https://facebook.com/ScooterTheSpareTheAirDog).

###