

Air

Fact sheet



Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA Victoria) is the state's independent environmental regulator. Under the powers of the *Environment Protection Act 1970*, EPA is responsible for protecting the environment and the community through effective regulation of industry and pollution. EPA's vision is a healthy environment that supports a liveable and prosperous Victoria. As part of its *5 Year Plan* EPA is committed to ensuring our air quality meets or surpasses national and state air quality objectives.

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What is air pollution?

Air pollution is the introduction of chemicals or matter to the atmosphere which may cause harm or discomfort to humans or animals. Air pollution is more common in major industrial or urban areas. Melbourne has three major forms of air pollution:

- The build-up of fine particles and other pollutants in still conditions, predominantly due to motor vehicle (commonly referred to as smog) and the burning of wood fires.
- Windborne dust transported long distances in high winds.
- Recirculation of polluted air (such as smog) by sea breezes.

In an international context Melbourne's air quality remains quite good. There has been little change in many air pollutants over the last decade despite increasing pressures such as population growth. EPA has led many of the improvements in air quality standards over the last 30 years. Fossil fuel combustion, particularly as it occurs in motor vehicles, is still a major source of air pollution. In Victoria, cars and trucks are responsible for about half the state's air pollution in summer. In winter the greatest source of polluting particles is from home heating.

EPA's role in regulating air pollution

EPA has a key role in protecting the community from air pollution through:

- developing State Environment Protection Policies (SEPP), setting rules that cars, trucks, factories and businesses must follow to minimise air pollution
- managing Air Monitoring Stations, which help EPA monitor the state of the air
- enforcing pollution emission limits on cars, trucks and factories
- supporting bans on backyard burning
- partnering with and advising government, industry and the community.

EPA also actively seeks to influence community behaviour through raising public awareness of what the issues are and what we can all do to keep improving our air quality.

Air quality bulletins

EPA monitors air quality in order to ensure that the health and wellbeing of Victorians is maintained. Monitoring allows air pollution levels to be checked against targets and provides data for ongoing research into how air pollution affects health.

There are 15 fixed monitoring stations across Victoria.

REPORTING AIR POLLUTION

To report air pollution, including excessive smoke from vehicles, call EPA's 24-hour Pollution Hotline on **1300 EPA VIC (1300 372 842)**.

Visit epa.vic.gov.au to learn more about EPA's air monitoring programs and tips on how to reduce air pollution in your community.

Mobile laboratories are also available to test air quality during events such as bushfires or for particular sites of concern to the community.

The stations measure a range of pollutants - each of which has a different impact on humans or the environment. Air quality bulletins are issued twice a day from Monday to Friday, and daily at weekends. Hourly data is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at www.epa.vic.gov.au

Reducing air pollution from motor vehicles

Motor vehicles make the largest contribution to poor air quality in Victoria. At a national level EPA is involved in the development and implementation of new Australian Design Rules for new cars, and national fuel quality standards.

Using the *Environment Protection (Vehicle Emissions) Regulations 2003*, EPA regulates car emissions, noise and fuel. Under these regulations, a vehicle must not continuously emit visible smoke for 10 seconds or more. Vehicles that do can be reported to EPA.

EPA's Smoky Vehicle Program allows the public to report smoky vehicles online or via the EPA Pollution Hotline.

Smog alerts

EPA also forecasts smog days for Melbourne. A smog alert can act as a warning for people with respiratory and cardiovascular disease. You can get free smog alert forecast emails by subscribing at www.epa.vic.gov.au

On smog alert days people are asked to:

- reduce car usage
- limit use of wood fires
- not burn off or light incinerators.

Due to tightening standards for fuel and motor vehicles, smog alerts are issued much less frequently for Melbourne than they were in years gone by.

Partnering to advise and educate industry

Industry is another major contributor to air pollution in Victoria. EPA's work in partnership with other agencies means significant progress has been made in reducing emissions from large industrial premises. In addition, licencing reform has led to standard conditions for air emissions for EPA licenced sites across Victoria.

