



AIR CENTRAL TEXAS

Be Air Aware



A Guide to
Air Quality
and Your Health

*"It's a code yellow
day for particle
pollution"*

*"Ozone levels are
forecast to be unhealthy
for sensitive groups"*

*"Local air quality is
unhealthy today"*

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You may hear these alerts on radio or TV or read them in the newspaper. But what do they mean if you:

- Are active outdoors?
- Have children who play outdoors?
- Are an older adult?
- Have heart or lung disease?

This guide will help you understand how to find out about air quality in your area and protect your health.

What is the AQI?

The AQI is an index for reporting daily air quality. It tells you how clean or unhealthy your air is, and what associated health effects might be a concern. The AQI focuses on health effects you may experience within a few hours or days after breathing unhealthy air. The AQI is calculated for four major air pollutants regulated by the Clean Air Act: ground-level ozone, particle pollution, carbon monoxide, and sulfur dioxide.

Where can I find the AQI?

Checking local air quality is as easy as checking the weather.

You can find the latest AQI values on the Internet, on your local TV news, and in many newspapers.

- You can find the AQI for the Austin region at AirCentralTexas.org or for other locations at: AirNow.gov
- Local news channels will typically report the AQI during their weather forecast.
- Newspapers typically will report the AQI in the weather forecast section.

How does the AQI work?

Think of the AQI as a yardstick that runs from 0 to 500. The higher the AQI value, the greater the level of air pollution and the greater the health concern. For example, an AQI value of 50 represents good air quality with little or no potential to affect public health, while an AQI value over 300 represents air quality so hazardous that everyone may experience serious effects. An AQI value of 100 generally corresponds to the national air quality standard for the pollutant, which is the level EPA has set to protect public health. AQI values at or below 100 are generally thought of as satisfactory. When AQI values are above 100, air quality is considered to be unhealthy—at first for certain sensitive groups of people, then for everyone as AQI values increase.

Air Quality Index Levels of Health Concern	Numerical Value	Meaning
Good	0 to 50	Air quality is considered satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk.
Moderate	51 to 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 to 150	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is not likely to be affected.
Unhealthy	151 to 200	Everyone may begin to experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
Very Unhealthy	201 to 300	Health warnings of emergency conditions. The entire population is more likely to be affected.
Hazardous	301 to 500	Health alert: everyone may experience more serious health effects.