

*Breathe in...breathe out...breathe in...
breathe out... This is something we do
thousands of times each day, every day.
Without air, we cannot live.*

*What happens when the air we breathe is
polluted? While the rhythm of breathing
continues, our health is jeopardized by
inhaling potentially hazardous pollutants.*

What is nonattainment?

To protect our health and the quality of the air we breathe, the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has set limits on the amounts of certain pollutants that can safely be in our air. These limits are called the National Ambient Air Quality Standards or NAAQS.

EPA considers any geographic area that meets or has pollutant levels below the NAAQS an **attainment area**. Under ideal circumstances, all of Idaho would be classified as “attainment.” An area with persistent high pollutant levels is designated a **nonattainment area**. This means that the area has violated federal health-based standards for outdoor air pollution.

Each nonattainment area is declared for a specific pollutant. This means that the same area could be “attainment” for one pollutant, but “nonattainment” for a different pollutant. Nonattainment areas for different pollutants may overlap each other or share common boundaries.

You can see if you live in a nonattainment area by logging on to www.deq.idaho.gov/attainment-nonattainment.

For more information

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DEQ Web Resources

Attainment and Nonattainment

www.deq.idaho.gov/attainment-nonattainment

Air Quality Index

www.deq.idaho.gov/air-quality/monitoring

Daily Air Quality Reports

www.deq.idaho.gov/daily-air-quality-reports-and-forecasts

Ozone

www.deq.idaho.gov/ozone

Particulate Matter

www.deq.idaho.gov/particulate-matter

Nonattainment: When Good Air Goes Bad



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What does nonattainment mean to me, as an Idaho citizen?

If you live in a nonattainment area, the air where you live is considered unhealthy, at least part of the time. While this does not mean you need to panic or move away, it is a good idea to pay close attention to local air quality and to actions you take that can affect it.



Watch for air quality alerts, especially if you or a family member suffers from a heart or breathing-related disease, such as asthma or chronic

bronchitis. Tune in to your local radio or television station or log on to DEQ's Daily Air Quality Reports webpage (www.deq.idaho.gov/daily-air-quality-reports-forecasts) to keep up-to-date about air quality in your area. Individuals who are especially sensitive to air pollution, such as the young, the elderly, and those with pre-existing heart or breathing conditions, may need to limit time outdoors when air quality is poor. Keep in mind that air quality can be an issue even in attainment areas, so pay close attention to air quality forecasts no matter where you live.

What does nonattainment mean to government and business?

Compliance with air quality standards contributes to economic growth. Nonattainment status may limit production capabilities of existing industries and could keep new industries from locating in a nonattainment area. This can result in fewer job opportunities.

Failure to act on nonattainment status, such as failure to develop or follow an improvement plan, can result in a potential loss of federal highway funding. It is costly and time-consuming to develop and implement plans to regain attainment status. DEQ strives to avoid having areas of Idaho designated nonattainment by taking proactive measures to protect air quality. Citizens can do many things to help.

Pollutants of concern in Idaho

EPA sets standards for six pollutants called "criteria pollutants." Two of these currently could trigger non-attainment status in Idaho.

Ozone. This gas is mainly a concern in the Treasure Valley (Ada/Canyon County area) and in the Coeur d'Alene area. It is created through a chemical reaction in the presence of heat and strong sunlight, so is mainly an issue on hot summer days.

Fine Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5}). These very small particles of dust, soot, and chemicals are of concern in the far north (Pinehurst and St. Maries areas) and far southeast parts of the state (Preston/Franklin area). They are mainly caused by combustion from sources such as vehicle engines and wood burning.



How does an area get back into attainment?

If an area is designated nonattainment, it is important to return it to attainment as quickly as possible. DEQ, other government agencies, businesses, and the public can work together to make this happen.

Once an area has been classified nonattainment, DEQ has three years to submit a plan to EPA that outlines how the area will again meet the standard.

When pollution reductions have been reached, DEQ may ask EPA to redesignate the area as an attainment area. To do this, DEQ must have:

- Developed a nonattainment plan and had it approved by EPA.
- Demonstrated that air quality now meets the standard that had been violated.
- Demonstrated proof of real pollution reductions. That is, improvements cannot be caused by factors such as unusually favorable weather conditions.
- Developed and obtained EPA approval of a plan that outlines how the air will stay healthy for 20 years.

How can I make a difference?

Air quality affects us all, so it is in everyone's best interest to take an active role in protecting it. Small actions by many add up to a big difference.

- **Drive less.** Ride the bus, carpool, walk, bike, combine errands, or use other forms of alternative transportation.
- **Turn off your vehicle** when sitting idle, such as when waiting in a drive-through.
- **Maintain your car** and keep tires properly inflated.
- **Don't top off the gas tank.** Topping off allows harmful chemicals to escape into the air.
- **Avoid using gasoline-powered hand tools and lawnmowers**, especially on hot days.
- **Reduce burning.** Burning releases many types of pollutants into the air.
- **Convert from wood to gas or electric heat**, or get a clean-burning fireplace insert or wood stove.
- **Comply with air quality advisories and burn bans.**
- **Encourage your local municipality to enact ordinances** that protect air quality.