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Second Hottest Year on Record Slowed California's Smog Progress

California cities again dominate report highlighting worst air quality in the nation

Editor's Note: Trend charts, data and rankings for metro areas and counties are available at www.stateoftheair.org/california2018

SACRAMENTO, CA (April 18, 2018) – The American Lung Association's *State of the Air 2018* report shows that once again California has some of the worst air quality in the nation. This year's report reveals that the state's ozone levels rose significantly due to some of the warmest temperatures on record in 2016. The results serve as a strong reminder that addressing climate change and its impacts on our air quality are key to the fight for healthy air.

"Federal and state policies like the Clean Air Act and strong California clean car standards are working. We are improving air quality, but the impacts of climate change are interfering with progress," said Bonnie Holmes-Gen, Senior Director, Air Quality and Climate Change, American Lung Association in California. "The reality is California still has unhealthy levels of air pollution in large areas of the state, which puts Californians at risk for premature death and other serious health effects such as asthma, COPD and lung cancer. We must continue the life-saving work of cutting air pollution and slowing climate change."

The *State of the Air 2018* found that 90 percent of Californians live in areas with unhealthy air at some point during the year. California's most populous metro area, **Los Angeles**, led the nation for ozone pollution, faring worse than it did in the 2017 report. The San Joaquin Valley dominated the list of most polluted for short-term and year-round particle pollution with **Visalia**, **Bakersfield** and **Fresno** all landing in the top five. (See lists below.)

Key Report Findings

- **Rising temperatures linked to climate change hinder fight against ozone** (also known as smog).
 - **Eight cities increased their unhealthy ozone averages:** Los Angeles-Long Beach (and Inland Empire), Bakersfield, Visalia, Sacramento, San Diego, Redding-Red Bluff, the San Francisco Bay Area (including Stockton) and Chico. Much of this can be attributed to the inclusion of 2016 data in the three-year average, which was the second warmest year in U.S. history. This increase in ozone follows several years of increase in particle levels due to drought conditions.
- **San Joaquin Valley leads nation in particle pollution** (also known as soot).
 - Of the top ten regions for short-term and year-round particle pollution, seven are in California: Visalia-Porterville-Hanford, Bakersfield, Los Angeles-Long Beach (and Inland Empire), Fresno-Madera, Modesto-Merced, El Centro and the San Francisco Bay Area (including Stockton.)

- Bakersfield remained atop the list for short-term particle pollution and ranked third for year-round particle pollution, though levels did improve in both categories.
- **Two cities among cleanest in America.** Salinas landed a spot on two lists of the cleanest cities in the U.S. thanks to zero unhealthy ozone days and one of the lowest year-round particle pollution levels. Santa Maria-Santa Barbara was also recognized as the cleanest region for short-term particle pollution.

The *State of the Air 2018* report is based on air quality monitoring data collected in 2014 – 2016, the most recent years of quality assured data available. It is important to note that the historic wildfires of 2017 were not captured in this year’s report. The report focuses on ozone and particle pollution, as they are the most widespread forms of air pollution threatening public health.

“Ozone and particle pollution are especially harmful to children, seniors and those with asthma and other lung diseases. When they breathe polluted air, too often they end up in the doctor’s office, the hospital or the emergency room,” said Dr. Alex Sherriffs, a Fresno area physician and member of the San Joaquin Valley Air District Board and the California Air Resources Board.

“I was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2014 and it came as a complete shock to me. I now realize that living and working in Los Angeles meant I was exposed to dangerous levels of air pollution for decades,” said Victoria Dresbach, a lung cancer survivor. “I don’t want future generations to go through what I have had to experience. I hope that we can continue to reduce vehicle emissions in Los Angeles and all of California to further improve air quality and allow everyone to breathe easier.”

Climate change is worsening our air pollution problems, as this report shows. Warmer temperatures linked to climate change increase the frequency and severity of ozone days and make it harder to reach our clean air goals. Climate change is also linked to extreme weather patterns, drought and wildfires, which contribute to increased particle pollution.

“It is critical that California continues to lead the nation in the transition away from polluting fossil fuels, especially as the federal government takes steps to roll back lifesaving measures that reduce climate pollution like clean car standards,” Holmes-Gen said. “Moving to a zero-emission vehicle future will have huge positive impacts on public health and improve the lives of those living with lung disease.”

Learn more about California’s grades including local air quality data for each county and metropolitan area at www.stateoftheair.org/california2018. For media interested in speaking with an expert, please contact Ryan Endean at the American Lung Association in California at (916) 585-7666 or ryan.endean@lung.org.

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About the American Lung Association in California

The American Lung Association in California is the leading organization working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease through research, education and advocacy. The Lung Association is focused on four strategic imperatives: to defeat lung cancer, to improve the air we breathe, to reduce the burden of lung disease on individuals and their families, and to eliminate tobacco use and tobacco-related diseases. For more information about the American Lung Association in California or to support the work it does, call 1-800-LUNGUSA (1-800-685-4872) or visit www.lung.org/california.

State of the Air 2018 Rankings

Most Polluted Cities for Ozone

1. Los Angeles-Long Beach (incl. Inland Empire)
2. Bakersfield
3. Visalia-Porterville-Hanford
4. Fresno-Madera
5. Sacramento-Roseville
6. San Diego-Carlsbad
7. Modesto-Merced
8. Phoenix, AZ
9. Redding-Red Bluff
10. New York, NY-Newark, NJ

Most Polluted Cities for Short-Term Particle Pollution

1. Bakersfield
2. Visalia-Porterville-Hanford
3. Fresno-Madera
4. Fairbanks, AK
5. Modesto-Merced
6. San Jose-San Francisco-Oakland (incl. Stockton)
7. Los Angeles-Long Beach (incl. Inland Empire)
8. Salt Lake City, UT
9. El Centro
10. Pittsburgh, PA

Most Polluted Cities for Year-Round Particle Pollution

1. Fairbanks, AK
2. Visalia-Porterville-Hanford
3. Bakersfield
4. Los Angeles-Long Beach (incl. Inland Empire)
5. Fresno-Madera
6. Modesto-Merced
7. El Centro
8. Pittsburgh, PA & Lancaster, PA (Tie)
10. San Jose-San Francisco-Oakland (incl. Stockton) & Cleveland, OH (Tie)