



Air Quality Index

Where Do We Go From Here?

February 2002



Air Quality Index

- **Long range planning effort in 2002**
- **Commissioned by:**
 - John Seitz, Director**
 - Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards**
- **Decisions on future AQI directions**



Why is the AQI Important?

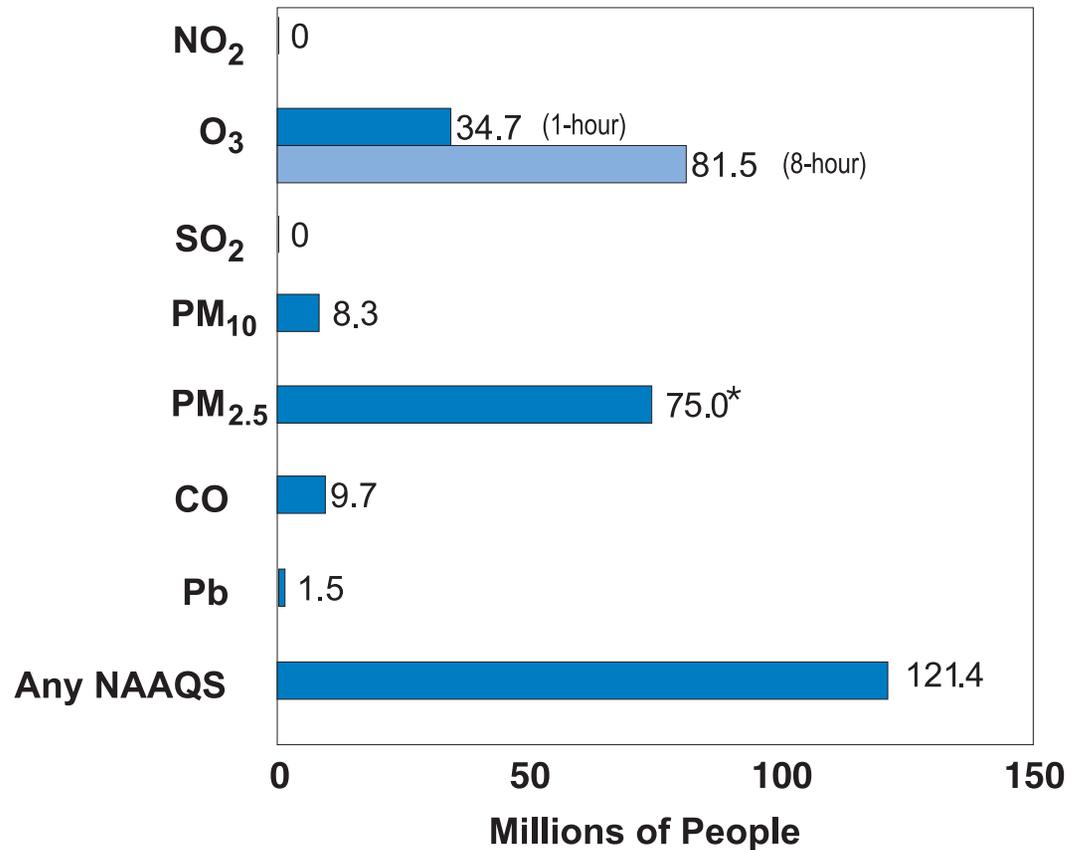
- Links air quality levels and health in the same message
- Raises environmental awareness
- Interest creates demand for more air quality reporting
- Makes air agencies more valuable





Why is the AQI Important?

- Over 121 million people live in counties with unhealthy air





Why has AQI been Successful?

Based on strong science



Partnership with State/
Local agencies



AIRNOW distribution



Good media coverage





AQI is Easy to Understand



Pollutant: Ozone

Today's Forecast: 130

Quality: Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups

Children and people with asthma are the groups most at risk



Expanding AQI Use is Important

- **Public and media demand is there**
- **Useful public service**
- **Mostly ozone to date; very little PM coverage**
- **Significant PM air quality and health issues**



AQI Growing Pains

- **Media sometimes garbling health message**
- **State/local agencies want more detailed health information – especially PM**
- **Some State/local agencies have resource constraints to provide AQI via forecasts, the web and real-time**
- **Year-round PM_{2.5} adds complexity**
 - **Another health message**
 - **Additional monitors, data transfer, expertise**



Implement PM Forecasting

- **Improve State and local agencies PM_{2.5} monitor and information transfer capabilities**
- **Issue PM_{2.5} network design guidance**
- **Issue PM forecast guidance and pilot in 2 cities**



Enhance the Current Process

- **Support national air quality conference and training for forecasters**
- **Support national forecast model with NOAA**
- **Data available around the clock**
- **Expand mapping capabilities**



Step Up Communications

- **Provide better messages for news media**
 - Focus group efforts
- **Promote national marketing opportunities**
 - Marketing strategy
 - Summertime Safety Campaign
 - Year-Round AQI Campaign
- **Target specific audiences**
 - Hispanic communities
 - Medical professionals
 - Emergency response (e.g. wildfires)



New Tool to Supplement AQI

Report Card for Cities

- Provide # AQI days above 100
- Consumer Report format
- Updated annually with Trends Report
- Interactive web tool

Legend:

- No Data
- 0 days > 100
- ◐ 1 day > 100
- ◑ 2-4 days > 100
- ◒ 5-10 days > 100
- more than 10 days > 100

MSA	ozone	CO	PM _{2.5}	PM ₁₀	SO ₂	NO ₂
ABILENE, TX	○	◐	◐	◐	◐	◐
ASHEVILLE, NC	◒	●	●	●	●	●
ATLANTA, GA	●	●	●	●	●	●
ALLENTOWN-BETHLEHEM-EASTON, PA	◒	●	◒	●	●	●



Future Public Information Tools

- **Air Toxics Index**
 - Not ripe at this time
 - Further evaluation needed of monitoring network, health effects, and forecasting
 - Pilot study in 2002
- **Visibility Images**
 - Images already in use in some cities
 - Expect more web cam use
 - Local, not national tool
 - Work with State/local agencies to develop consistent approach to web cam use, location and possible reporting



Our Vision for the AQI

- **Nationwide AQI reporting and forecasting – including PM2.5**
- **Data available around the clock every hour**
- **National AQI maps**
- **Major Agency announcements and promotion**
- **Extensive media coverage**
- **Target audiences reached**
- **National air quality forecast tools from NOAA/EPA**