

Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee

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July 25, 2012

James E. Lee
Meteorologist-in-charge
National Weather Service
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
43858 Weather Service Rd.
Sterling, VA 20166

Dear Mr. Lee:

I am writing on behalf of the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC) to urge you to continue support for the issuance of the Code Orange based air quality alerts.

Recently MWAQC learned that the National Weather Service, Sterling (Virginia) stopped issuing air quality alerts based on Code Orange to the general public. Air quality is an issue of public health and is a concern for the people in the Washington region. Many who suffer from respiratory problems or who care for children or the elderly rely on air alerts to plan accordingly. Schools take advantage of air alerts to limit the outdoor activities for their students. A Clean Air Partners' survey found that most people take actions on Code Orange days following an air alert. Clearly the Code Orange-based air quality alerts have proven to be helpful in protecting respiratory health for the people in the metropolitan Washington region.

MWAQC is certified by the governors of Maryland and Virginia and the mayor of the District of Columbia to develop regional ground-level ozone and PM_{2.5} air quality plans and strategies for the Washington, DC-MD-VA non-attainment area. Air pollution is an important public health issue. It causes respiratory problems and affects young children, the elderly, and those with chronic respiratory diseases in particular. For this reason, it is therefore very important that air alerts for Code Orange be reinstated to keep protecting the public health. Code Orange-based air quality alerts provided by NWS, Sterling, have proven valuable to metropolitan Washington area residents and, in particular, young children, the elderly, and those with chronic respiratory diseases.

MWAQC appreciates the contribution made by the National Weather Service to public health through its air quality alert program. We urge you to preserve the issuance of the Code Orange-based air alert program to continue protecting the health of metropolitan Washington region residents.

Sincerely,

Phil Mendelson, Chair
Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee