

About the Project

EPA SCHOOLS MONITORING INITIATIVE FACT SHEET

ACTION

On March 31, 2009, EPA released a list of priority schools for air quality monitoring, as part of an initiative to understand whether outdoor toxic air pollution poses health concerns to schoolchildren.

The initial monitoring will take place at [62 schools in 22 states](#). EPA selected the schools using a number of factors, including results from a computer modeling analysis, results from a recent newspaper series on air toxics at schools, and in consultation with state and local air agencies.

That information raised some questions about outdoor air quality around the schools on the list. Measuring the levels of toxics in the air around the school will help EPA understand whether that air quality poses any health concerns. EPA will use what it learns from this monitoring initiative to determine its next steps as it works to protect children's health where they live, play and learn.

EPA is following an aggressive timeline to begin sampling air outside the schools, focusing on some schools near large industries and some schools in urban areas, where emissions of air toxics come from a mix of large and small industries, cars, trucks, buses and other sources. The agency is monitoring for chemicals commonly found in many areas of the country that may have harmful effects if people are exposed to them at high enough levels over a long period of time.

EPA is asking state and local agencies to install and operate the monitors. The agency will redirect \$2.25 million from the competitive Community Scale Air Toxics Monitoring Grants program to purchase monitoring equipment and pay for laboratory analysis of the air quality samples from each school. This partnership will help EPA maximize its monitoring and analytical capabilities to develop a clearer picture of potential risks to children from toxic air pollution.

ABOUT THE MONITORING

Monitoring at the schools will be phased in over the next three months. In some states, monitoring equipment is readily available and can be quickly moved to the schools to be monitored. EPA will purchase equipment for others.

The monitors will measure two types of pollutants in the outdoor air at the priority schools: pollutants that are in gas form, such as benzene; and pollutants that are in particle form, including metals such as hexavalent chromium, manganese or lead. The pollutants monitored will vary by school, based on the best available information about the pollution sources in the area. EPA and states also will install equipment to measure wind speed and direction at each school during the monitoring.

Monitors will be in place at each school for 60 days to provide a snapshot of toxics in the outdoor air. The monitors will sample air quality on 10 different days during that time. The samples will be analyzed by the laboratories EPA uses for air quality analysis. To ensure the data is sound, EPA and state air agencies will check monitors

to be sure they are operating correctly, inspect the laboratories, and review the data for any anomalies.

AFTER THE MONITORING: NEXT STEPS

Once the air toxics data for a school are quality-assured, EPA will analyze the results to estimate how exposure to the outdoor air around the school might affect health over the long-term. The agency will make projections of the potential long-term health concerns related to cancer and for other chronic health effects -- especially respiratory and neurological effects, which are the most common chronic non-cancer effects from exposure to air toxics.

If EPA finds a low potential for health concerns from chronic exposure to air toxics at a school, the agency may cease monitoring at that school. If potential health concerns are high, EPA will take steps to mitigate the pollution causing the problems. If EPA cannot estimate potential effects based on the initial phase of monitoring, EPA may continue monitoring to obtain additional data.

EPA will make the results available to the public at <http://www.epa.gov/schoolair>.

BACKGROUND

Air toxics, also known as hazardous air pollutants, are pollutants known, or suspected to cause cancer and other serious health effects. EPA regulates emissions of 187 air toxics under the Clean Air Act.

From 1990 to 2005, emissions of air toxics in the United States declined 41 percent, as a result of federal and state regulations, along with local emission reduction programs. Levels of air toxics, however, can vary widely from place to place depending upon a number of factors including the amount and types of industry nearby, proximity to heavily traveled or congested roadways, and weather patterns.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Information about the monitoring initiative, including the list of schools for initial monitoring, is available at <http://www.epa.gov/schoolair>.

For questions about schools being monitored in your area, please contact the EPA regional office for your state. A list of contacts is below.

EPA Region 1: Serving Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont and 10 Tribal Nations

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EPA Region 2: Serving New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands, and 7 Tribal Nations

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