



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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American Lung Association report shows improvement in Louisiana's air quality

BATON ROUGE – The American Lung Association's State of the Air report was released today and demonstrates the improvement in air quality throughout Louisiana. Several cities were listed as cleanest in the nation for particle pollution, known as PM 2.5, with Monroe-Bastrop listed as one of the top seven cleanest cities in the nation for PM 2.5 and ozone combined.

No parishes were listed in the top 25 for most polluted for PM 2.5. However, the Baton Rouge Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) was listed as the No. 24 most ozone polluted city. This MSA includes East and West Baton Rouge, East and West Feliciana, St. Helena, Pointe Coupee, Livingston, Ascension, Assumption and Iberville Parishes. This same area is listed as one of the cleanest cities for PM 2.5.

"The data shows that the air quality in the state continues to get better," said DEQ Secretary Peggy Hatch. "Even though the Baton Rouge area is listed by the ALA as ozone polluted, the number of actual high ozone days has decreased significantly."

For the period used in the ALA report, 2008-2010, East Baton Rouge parish had 27 orange days, which is unhealthy for sensitive people and no red (unhealthy for all) or purple (very unhealthy). In last year's ALA report, which consisted of data from 2007-2009, East Baton Rouge had 33 orange days and 1 red. That same report had Iberville with 30 orange days and 2 red, while in this year's report Iberville had 18 orange and 0 red.

Other cities on the 2012 list include Los Angeles, which was No. 1 on the list, which had 185 orange, 14 red and one purple during that time period; No. 2 Bakersfield, 209 orange, 48 red and 2 purple; and No. 8 Houston, 61 orange, 8 red and 0 purple. The ALA scale has no relationship to EPA air quality standards and with just one orange Air Quality Index day, a city will automatically get a B with the ALA scale.

"Looking at the numbers, you can see that the number of ozone days on the Air Quality Index chart continues to decrease, even though the EPA standards have become stricter during this period," Hatch said. "In fact, the air quality is the best it has been since the Clean Air Act was enacted. EPA recognized Louisiana for this accomplishment in 2011."

In 2008, DEQ's ambient air quality monitoring data showed that, for the first time, Ascension, East Baton Rouge, Iberville, Livingston, and West Baton Rouge Parishes met both the original 1-hour standard as well as the more stringent 1997 8-hour standard. On November 30, 2011, EPA redesignated these parishes as attainment areas with respect to the 1997 ozone NAAQS, effective December 30, 2011. EPA has also recognized the state as meeting the federal air quality standards for PM 2.5.

The Louisiana cities listed as cleanest in the nation for PM 2.5 are: Alexandria; Baton Rouge-Pierre Part; Houma-Bayou Cane-Thibodaux; Lafayette-Acadiana; Lake Charles-Jennings; Monroe-Bastrop; and Shreveport-Bossier City-Minden.