



AQI Frequently Asked Questions

What is the AQI?

The [AQI](#), or Air Quality Index, is a uniform index for reporting daily air quality. It provides predictive information in real time on the local air quality, and provides basic guidance for reducing exposure to air pollution and for public health concerns. For more information, refer to the [AQI Basics](#) page and EPA's [AirNow](#).

Why are the dots different sizes?

A larger dot represents multiple monitoring sites. Zoom in to see individual air monitoring sites. Zoom out to see the entire state represented by the highest value.

Why is the data collection time delayed?

Data are presented in near real time for the Pacific Standard Time zone (PST), and are the average of the previous hour. The map typically updates at 15 minutes past the top of the hour.

How accurate are the data?

DEQ staff makes every effort to ensure that the data are current, reliable, and accurate. However, the near real-time monitoring data is intended for informational purposes, and has not yet been through a rigorous quality assurance and data validation process.

How can I download data?

On the "Interactive Reports" tab there are several ways to select and download data collected since Jan. 1, 2018. This [video tutorial](#) walks the user through some options. If you need older data, please contact us at AQM.Questions@deq.state.or.us or call 503-693-5753. Historical data are also available through the EPA's [AirData](#) and [AirNow](#) websites.

Why did my site disappear from the map?

If a site appears gray or disappears it may be temporarily off line. We do experience occasional technical difficulties, such as power outages, cellular failures and equipment malfunctions, which we work to solve expeditiously. You may also find issues with web browsers or mobile apps that can be resolved by refreshing or restarting. Please help us [track](#) any recurring problems.

Why doesn't the AQI value match what is shown on other web sites?

DEQ's air monitoring sites are operated according to federal regulations and approved sampling methods. The AQI is calculated using the [NowCast](#) method to provide a uniform air quality index in real time. While other networks can provide useful information, they may use a variety of sources and methods that are difficult to verify.

Why doesn't the [air quality forecast](#) match the current AQI?

Our forecasters use the best available technology and information to predict air quality conditions, but a complex system affords a degree of uncertainty. When available, [current monitoring data](#) is a better choice for directing activities and avoiding exposure to air pollution.

Why isn't there a monitoring site in my area?

Due to practical constraints and data quality objectives, DEQ cannot monitor everywhere, but we use historical data and air emissions modeling to help us choose representative sites. DEQ sees the need to

expand its monitoring network in Oregon and plans to add [30 new sites](#) in 2019. Please [let us know](#) if you have concerns about the air quality in your neighborhood.

Why don't you monitor ozone year round?

[Ozone](#) levels increase when hot temperatures and low winds combine with pollution from sources including cars, gas-powered engines and chemicals in paints and aerosols. In Oregon, these conditions occur only in the spring and summer, although we monitor at two sites in the Portland area year round. The EPA's established ozone season for Oregon is May 1 – October 1, during which time we operate 10 ozone monitoring sites.

Why aren't air toxics included in the AQI?

[Air toxics](#) are air pollutants known or suspected to cause cancer or other serious health problems. Air toxics come from a variety of sources including cars and trucks, all types of burning (including fireplaces and woodstoves), businesses, industries and consumer products. These include diesel soot, benzene, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (tar-like by-products from auto exhaust and other sources) and metals, including manganese, nickel and lead. These compounds are present in very low concentrations, and at this time can only be reliably measured with complex laboratory analyses, which typically take several weeks to complete. Emerging technology may offer more real time monitoring solutions in the future.

When does DEQ issue air pollution advisories?

DEQ issues [air pollution advisories](#) to inform the public when conditions are likely to result in unhealthy air quality. DEQ encourages residents to take precautions to safeguard their health and to reduce pollution. In the summer, DEQ issues advisories for [ozone](#), commonly called smog, and for [particulate matter](#), the main ingredient in wildfire smoke. In the winter, DEQ issues advisories for particulate matter, for any area of the state when cold temperatures and stagnant air may cause particle pollution levels to rise.

Why are there small fires burning on state and federal lands?

The U.S. Forest Service, [Oregon Department of Forestry](#), [Oregon Department of Agriculture](#) and others conduct prescribed burning operations in the spring and fall for forest and crop management. They have programs in place to minimize the smoke intrusions on populated areas. If you are impacted by smoke please file a [report online](#) or call 888-997-7888.

What can we do about smoke from wildfires?

[Wildfires](#) have increased in number, size, and intensity over the past few years. DEQ's [AQI website](#) and OregonAIR mobile application for [Apple](#) or [Android](#) devices display real time air quality data from air monitoring sites across Oregon. The [Oregon Smoke Blog](#) is a valuable source of information on current wildfires in Oregon, including links to various agency websites.

Are we seeing an increase in wildfires and wildfire smoke because of climate change?

The [Oregon Climate Change Research Institute Report](#) states, "There is strengthening evidence that Oregon is already experiencing the effects of climate change." Hotter, drier weather may increase the likelihood of larger, more destructive wildfires. Climate change is partly to blame.

How can we protect ourselves from exposure to smoke?

The [Oregon Health Authority](#) provides guidance on the health effects of exposure to wildfire smoke. Listen to your body and contact your healthcare provider or 911 if you are experiencing health symptoms.

Should we consider canceling sporting events or public gatherings because of wildfire smoke incursions?

The [Oregon Health Authority](#) provides public health guidance based on the AQI, and specific guidance for [schools](#).

How can I use air quality sensors in my community?

Over the last few years, a variety of [low-cost air quality sensors](#) have become commercially available. Their [performance](#) and [application](#) are being evaluated by regulatory agencies and researchers worldwide. It is likely that one of these low-cost sensors can help you learn more about your local air quality. If you would like more information, please contact us at AQM.Questions@deq.state.or.us or call 503-693-5753.

Any more questions or concerns?

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