

NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota's Air Quality Grade Explained

BISMARCK, N.D. – Every year the American Lung Association (ALA) releases its State of the Air report on air quality throughout the nation. This year the ALA assigned North Dakota a lower grade than it did in 2017. To determine its rankings, the ALA used two parameters—particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) and ozone. After analyzing these parameters, the North Dakota Department of Health, Division of Air Quality has concluded that wildfires in the western United States impacted the state's air quality on certain days last summer, resulting in a changed grade. To protect public health, the division issued air quality warnings on these high impact days.

The Division of Air Quality operates air quality monitoring stations throughout the state. Site locations include a variety of sources, ranging from urban areas to pristine national park sites. The data collected is compared to federal and state ambient (clean air) standards to ensure North Dakota meets all standards. This data must be certified on an annual basis and, once certified, it may be used by the public and organizations like the ALA. More information on the monitoring sites can be found at <https://deq.nd.gov/AQ/monitoring/>.

Although western wildfires did result in a grade change for the state, the ALA report also shows that North Dakota has some of the cleanest air in the nation. For example, Bismarck ranked fourth in the “Top 25 Cleanest Cities for Year-Round Particulate Pollution,” and McKenzie County ranked second in the “Top 25 Cleanest Counties for Year-Round Particulate Pollution” in the nation. North Dakota also had seven counties ranked in the “Top 25 Cleanest Counties for Ozone Air Pollution.” To view the complete ALA report, visit <http://www.lung.org/assets/documents/healthy-air/state-of-the-air/sota-2018-full.pdf>.

For more information on air quality monitoring in North Dakota, contact Ryan Mills, Division of Air Quality, at 701.328.5254.

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