



State of Louisiana

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ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Lung Association report favorable to Louisiana

BAON ROUGE -- The Department of Environmental Quality was pleased with the American Lung Association's annual State of the Air report that was released on Thursday. The report shows the air quality is improving throughout the state.

Seven parishes received better grades for ozone than they had in 2003. Orleans Parish is named as one of the cleanest in the nation for ozone. The American Lung Association also gave grades for particle pollution days. Every parish with particle pollution monitoring capabilities received passing grades.

Particle pollution comes from solid and liquid particles suspended in the air. The particles can be directly emitted from a source or formed in the atmosphere as part of a chemical reaction. Pollutants emitted when fuel is combusted, such as at power plants that use fossil fuels or in automobiles, are a main source of particle pollution.

Lafayette, Alexandria, Houma, Bayou Cane and Thibodaux were cited in the Lung Association report as some of the cleanest cities in the nation for particle pollution. Concordia, Rapides, St. Bernard and Terrebone parishes were also mentioned.

"This report indicates that the air quality is getting better," DEQ Secretary Mike McDaniel said. "All of our monitoring data shows we meet the particle pollution standards throughout the state and that's good news for Louisiana."

The Lung Association's ozone grades are based on the air quality index. That index measures the quality of air based on a color scheme, much like the terror alert system the federal government uses as a warning system. The air quality system measures ozone as orange is unhealthy for sensitive groups, red is unhealthy for everyone and purple is very unhealthy.

East Baton Rouge Parish received the worst ozone score in the state and was one of 10 parishes to receive a grade of "F." However, the parish did not rank in the 25 most polluted areas in the nation in the report. Los Angeles was named as the worst city for ozone with 168 orange days, 67 red and 21 purple. Comparatively, Baton Rouge had 30 orange, five red and zero purple days during the same time period.

"Louisiana parishes generally improved in ozone, with four improving one letter grade and three moving up two grades," the report stated. "Five parishes that failed the ozone grading in the 2003 report now received passing grades."