

Simple Solutions to Help Reduce Air Pollution

All Californians can make a difference

There are simple steps you can take in your everyday life to help improve air quality. Every time you drive to work or school, use your heater or air conditioner, clean your windows or even style your hair, you make choices that can reduce or increase air pollution.

On the road

In California, about half the air pollution comes from cars and trucks. Fewer trips in your car or truck can help improve air quality. Even how you drive can reduce your car's footprint. Take these into consideration when you are traveling on California roads:

1. Walk or ride a bike when possible.
2. Take public transportation.
3. Organize and condense errands into one trip.
4. When driving, accelerate gradually and obey the speed limit.
5. Drive less, particularly on days with unhealthy air.
6. Maintain your vehicle and keep your tires properly inflated.
7. Support the Smog Check Program.
8. Report smoking vehicles to 1-800-END-SMOG.
9. Travel lightly and remove any unnecessary items that may weigh down your vehicle.
10. Limit idling your vehicle to no more than 30 seconds.
11. When in the market for a new car, look for the most efficient, lowest-polluting vehicle or even a zero-emission electric car.

At home

There are many ways air quality can be improved in the home. By reducing energy consumption, choosing sustainable products and eliminating your exposure to chemicals, we can all contribute to a cleaner California.

Reducing energy consumption helps reduce air pollution. If less gasoline, natural gas and electricity (power plants burn fossil fuels to generate electricity) are used, not only do your bills decrease but less pollutants are emitted.

There are also many products in the home, garden and garage that emit smog-forming chemicals that pollute the air when used. Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and particulate matter (PM) contained in these products penetrate deep into the lungs and can trigger asthma attacks or worsen respiratory illnesses. The suggestions below will help reduce exposure in your home:

12. Turn the lights off when you leave a room.
13. Replace energy-hungry incandescent lights with compact florescent light bulbs.
14. Ask your energy supplier for a home audit and inquire about alternative energy solutions like solar or wind.
15. Opt for a fan instead of air conditioning.
16. Use a programmable thermostat and set it to 78°F in the summer and 68°F in the winter.
17. Install low-flow shower heads.
18. Recycle paper, plastic, metals and organic materials.
19. Use an EPA-approved wood burning stove or fireplace insert.
20. Don't use your wood stove or fireplace on days with unhealthy air.
21. Don't heat your home with a gas stove.
22. Use a surge protector for multiple appliances and turn it off when products are not in use.

23. Add insulation to your home.
24. Wash laundry in cold water and line dry.
25. When ready to replace, look for energy star appliances.
26. Use a propane or natural gas barbecue rather than a charcoal one.
27. Microwave or use a toaster oven for small meals.
28. Have your gas appliances and heater regularly inspected and maintained.
29. Use washable dishes, utensils and fabric napkins rather than disposable dinnerware.
30. Choose products that use recycled materials.
31. Eat locally, shop at farmers markets and buy organic products.
32. Buy products from sustainable sources such as bamboo and hemp.
33. Use durable reusable grocery bags and keep them in your car so you're never caught off guard.
34. Paint with a brush instead of a sprayer.
35. Store all solvents in airtight containers.
36. Use an electric or push lawn mower.
37. Use a rake or broom instead of a leaf blower.
38. Use water-based cleaning products that are labeled 'zero VOC'.
39. Insulate your water heater and any accessible hot water pipes.
40. Eliminate use of toxic chemicals at home; opt for natural substitutes.
41. Plant a tree! They filter the air and provide shade.
42. Let your elected representatives know you support action for cleaner air.

At Work

There are multiple ways of reducing consumption at the workplace. Considering we spend a good portion of every week at the office, use the suggestions below to keep your workplace environmentally friendly:

43. Carpool.
44. Telecommute.
45. Start a recycling program.
46. Print and photocopy on both sides of paper.
47. Bring your lunch to work to avoid mid-day outings.
48. Turn off office equipment, computers, printers, and fax machines, after hours.
49. Harness the power of the sun: open the blinds and turn off the lights.
50. Dress for the weather and adjust layers before adjusting the thermostat.

For More Information

Contact ARBs helpline at 1-800-242-4450 or via email at helpline@arb.ca.gov.

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