

CAMPAIGN FOR NEW YORK'S FUTURE

Air Quality

Mayor Bloomberg's PlaNYC initiative challenges New York to have the cleanest air of any major city in the nation. To achieve this goal, the plan calls for reducing particulate matter (soot) by 40 percent by 2030. This fact sheet has been prepared by the Campaign for New York's Future—a coalition of civic, business, environmental, labor, community and public health organizations—to answer some common questions about how the plan would improve air quality for all New Yorkers.

What is the current quality of the air in New York City?

Although the air quality in New York City has improved since standards were first enacted under the Clean Air Act in the 1970s, the City does not meet EPA standards for ozone (smog) and particulate matter (soot). Because the City does not comply with these standards, our air quality lags behind all but one of the largest cities in the U.S.

What are the health effects of breathing unclean air?

Particle pollution has been found to take months to years off a person's life. It can also induce heart attacks and strokes, cause lung cancer, trigger asthma attacks and increase the need for medical care and hospital visits.

Ozone, an extremely reactive gas, irritates the respiratory system and can kill people with severe respiratory problems such as emphysema, chronic bronchitis and asthma. Ozone causes shortness of breath and coughing, triggers asthma attacks and increases the need for emergency room visits and hospital admissions.

What is PM_{2.5}?

PM_{2.5} is a mixture of microscopic solids and aerosols, like tiny bits of dust and soot, that are 30 times smaller than the width of a human hair. PM_{2.5} is a byproduct of burning fuels in trucks and buses, factories and power plants, and boilers. Additionally, PM_{2.5} is formed from chemical reactions of other criteria pollutants including sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and volatile organic compounds.

Why does PlaNYC target PM_{2.5} for reduction?

PlaNYC targets PM_{2.5} reduction because it is the deadliest of "criteria pollutants" – the most commonly found air pollutants – causing up to 15,000 premature deaths annually. When inhaled, these tiny particles get trapped in the deepest part of the lungs and some pass through to the bloodstream. Additionally, New York City lags far behind its peer cities in reducing PM_{2.5} emissions. By targeting other pollutants that contribute to PM_{2.5} formation, including sulfur dioxide (SO₂), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), and volatile organic compounds (VOC's), New York City will help reduce smog pollution as well.

How will PlaNYC improve the air New Yorkers breathe?

To improve public health and air quality, PlaNYC seeks to reduce danger-

NYC Emission Sources

Heating Fuel – 29%
Power Plants – 10%
On-Road Vehicles – 11%
Off-Road Vehicles – 15%
Industrial Pollution – 15%

Health effects of dirty air

- aggravated asthma
- chronic bronchitis
- reduced lung function
- irregular heartbeat
- heart attacks

“[PlaNYC] sets a new international standard for how to achieve healthy air in one of the world’s largest cities.”

—Andy Darrell, Director, Living Cities Program, Environmental Defense

ous particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) levels by 40 percent citywide by 2030, but will continually reevaluate this target to ensure that New York City becomes the cleanest major city nationwide. PlaNYC will aggressively target local emission sources, while continuing to pressure states and the federal government to reduce air emissions nationwide. More specifically, PlaNYC will:

- Upgrade city vehicles: On- road (cars, trucks and buses) and off-road (ferries, construction equipment, and planes) by promoting fuel efficiency, cleaner fuels, and the use of exhaust filters for diesel engines.
- Reduce energy demand, use cleaner energy sources to power and heat buildings, and remove polluting boilers from public schools.
- Implement congestion pricing to reduce idling and vehicle miles traveled.
- Implement a comprehensive energy efficiency plan, facilitating the replacement of older power plants with a fleet of cleaner ones, and switching to cleaner fuels for both electricity generation and building heat and hot water.
- Create the NYC Energy Planning Board to oversee a more comprehensive and coordinated energy planning effort.
- Establish the NYC Energy Efficiency Authority that will coordinate all energy efficiency efforts within the city.
- Launch a collaborative air quality study to understand neighborhood level air quality across New York City.
- Reduce the maximum sulfur content in home heating oils and pursue cleaner fuel options.

Childhood Asthma Hospitalizations per 1000

National Average: 3.1
Bronx: 10.5
Brooklyn: 6.1
Manhattan: 6.2
Queens: 4.7
Staten Island: 2.7

(Source: Center for Disease Control; NYS Dept. of Health, 2004)

For more information, visit www.CampaignForNewYork.org.

The Campaign for New York’s Future is a coalition of civic, business, environmental, labor, community and public health organizations that support the goals and strategic direction of PlaNYC. Our goal is to make every neighborhood in NYC a great place to live and work, as well as make a significant contribution to fighting climate change. The coalition aims to encourage public debate — as well as fair and effective action — now and in the years to come. We recognize the need to both seize the opportunity for immediate action and to insure that this long-term plan evolves with continued dialogue and changing conditions.