

THE AIR DVD: *Chapter 3 - Ambient Air Monitoring*

Ambient air monitoring is the key to determining if we are protecting the health and welfare of Nebraskans.

If ambient air pollution levels are above the standards in an area where a facility is planning to expand or build, the facility will most likely be required to control their emissions to a higher degree.

The monitoring network in Nebraska is extensive and changes frequently.

The pollutants monitored in Nebraska include: particulate matter less than 10 microns and less than 2.5 microns in diameter; ozone; carbon monoxide; mercury; sulfur dioxide; and total reduced sulfur.

For more information about the ambient air monitoring program, view the current “Ambient Air Monitoring Network Review” and “Air Quality Report” on the NDEQ website.

The report is updated every one to two years and includes a summary of the monitoring data collected, locations of the monitors, and narrative describing the program.

Monthly concentrations of the total reduced sulfur monitoring data are also on the website under the Ambient Air Monitoring Program.

The NDEQ provides their ambient monitoring data to a national network. Nebraska’s ozone, meteorological, PM2.5, and PM10 data are reported to the AIRNow Network every hour of every day. All 50 U.S. states, U.S. territories, and Canada are a part of this network.

AIRNow is a valuable tool; it informs the public of current environmental conditions and predicts environmental conditions several hours in advance.

Current conditions and forecasts are based on EPA's Air Quality Index or AQI. The AQI was developed by the EPA to provide accurate, timely and easily understandable information about daily levels of air pollution.

All metropolitan areas with a population greater than 350,000 are required to report the AQI. The AQI also provides citizens with information on the general health effects associated with different pollution levels.

EPA has assigned a specific color to each AQI category to make it easier for people to understand whether air pollution is reaching unhealthy levels in their community.

Omaha is the only metropolitan area in Nebraska that is required to report AQI information on a daily basis. While Lincoln-Lancaster County is not required to submit their information to AirNow, they do so voluntarily.

The current day's AQI and air quality forecast can be found on the websites for AirNow, the Douglas County Health Department and the Lancaster County Health Department. www.airnow.gov
www.douglascounty.ne.gov www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/health