Did you participate in Clean Air Action Day July 7, 7 a.m. - 7 p.m.? Do you know what lifestyle habits contribute to clean air in your community?

Breathing Plano Air
By Barbara Gargiulo

How confident are you that the Plano air you breathe is clean and safe or that your child with respiratory issues can play outdoors without health consequences?

Daily air quality reports take the form of a color code. Green means good air quality with no health effects expected. Yellow indicates moderate air quality with unusually sensitive people at risk. Orange signifies that sensitive groups such as children and older adults are warned. Red is the code for unhealthy for most individuals. Purple means that everyone should avoid even mild exertion.

The City of Plano has partnered with Air North Texas to insure good quality air for Plano residents and to protect public health. You can take an active role by taking these steps: carpool, use public transportation, combine trips, avoid idling, obey speed limits, bicycle or walk, use clean fuel and technology, maintain your vehicle and report smoking vehicles. If you observe a smoking vehicle, make note of the following information: Texas license plate number, date observed, time (AM/PM), city. Report the information to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), **within 30 days,** by one of the following methods: online at http://www.mytxcar.org/SmokingVehicles/SmokingVehicleEnterSighting.dll/EXEC/0/1ioj8gm0acwqu81gxw1080d0m6dc or call **1-800-453-SMOG** *(7664).*

TCEQ mails a notification letter to the registered owner of the vehicle. The letter is a notification that the vehicle was observed emitting excessive visible exhaust emissions and states that they can be ticketed for operating a smoking vehicle on Texas roadways. State law under Section 547.605 of the Texas Transportation Code prohibits motor vehicles with excessive visible smoke emissions from operating on Texas roadways. Law enforcement authorities statewide may issue citations, punishable by a fine of not more than $350, to the owner of "a vehicle that emits visible smoke for 10 seconds or longer."

Learn about air quality and talk to others so we all can breathe deeply and safely.

Do you want to know more about our air?

What's in our air?
The air we breathe is a mixture of approximately 78.09% Nitrogen, 20.94% Oxygen and small amounts of Argon, Carbon Dioxide, Neon, helium, Krypton, Xeon, Nitrous Oxide, Hydrogen, methane, Nitrogen Dioxide, ozone, Sulfur Dioxide, Carbon Monoxide and Ammonia.

How is our air protected?
In 1963 Congress passed the Clean Air Act. The legislation stated that every individual has the right to breathe clean air. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was established to oversee air quality and to enforce regulations that protect the public. Provision was made for citizen suits. The law was strengthened and certain issues addressed in 1970 and again in 1990.

How is air quality measured?
When the EPA describes air quality, it does so by measuring certain criteria air pollutants. The names and sources of these pollutants are: 1.) Ozone which results from chemical reactions of volatile organic compounds in the presence of heat and sunlight. Think automobile exhaust at Central and LBJ on a hot sunny day. 2.) Carbon monoxide a product of the reactions in an internal combustion engine. 3.) Nitrogen Dioxide which comes from burning fuels like coal. 4.) Particles and ash which are formed from windblown dust and the burning of paper and wood. 5.) Sulfur Dioxide is formed when fuel, mainly oil and coal are burned. 6.) Lead which comes from the burning of leaded fuels and from smelting operations.