



2015 Air Pollution Solution Campaign

Toxic air pollution is a serious threat to the Southeast Community in Newport News because of the amount of pollution released and the combination of environmental stressors. Assessing the air and monitoring its quality are vital to decreasing pollution and protecting public health.

Background Information: In May 2015, the Southeast CARE Coalition launched a campaign to reduce toxic air emissions in Hampton Roads especially those from heavy traffic, electric utilities, ports, coal terminals and industry. By establishing a community-based air monitoring program in which citizen science is included to get a more realistic picture of local air quality and establishing an official air monitoring station in the Southeast Community recognized by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), we will begin to clean up our air by obtaining accurate measurements of pollutants such as volatile organic carbons (VOCs), heavy metals, diesel emissions, toxics and particulate matter (PM).

Key Facts:

- Exposure to high levels of air pollution has been associated with cardiovascular disease, premature death, adverse pregnancy outcomes and respiratory diseases such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).
- **Respiratory disease death rates for African Americans in Newport News are nearly twice the average rate in Virginia!** African Americans compose 77% of the population of the Southeast Community according to the most recent census.
- Vulnerable populations such as children, seniors and those with increasingly common respiratory diseases are impacted disproportionately by air pollution.
- Key environmental stressors in the Southeast Community include Interstate 664, Newport News Shipbuilding, Mica Co. of Canada Inc. and Newport News Marine Terminal.
- **In 2013 (most current data available), 72% of the toxic air emissions in Newport News occurred in the Southeast Community – 246,759 lbs. of toxic air were released in this community alone which includes over 39,000 lbs. of toluene, a recognized developmental toxicant!**
- Research completed by Old Dominion University has already found high levels of dangerous PM in the community.
- There is no air quality monitoring in Southeast Newport News. The closest DEQ monitor tracking pollutants such as PM is located at the NASA Langley Research Center in Hampton, more than 10 miles away.

Campaign Details:

Who? You, Your Friends, Family and Neighbors

What? Building power in Hampton Roads to reduce toxic air pollution

Why? By coming together we can achieve positive social and environmental change

How Can I Get Involved?

Contact **Angela Harris**, Youth and Community Coordinator for the Southeast CARE Coalition, at 757-236-7972 or nuckharris12@yahoo.com or **Kendyl Crawford**, Conservation Program Coordinator at the Sierra Club, at 757-268-8810 or kendyl.crawford@sierraclub.org.



How Can I Protect Myself and My Family from Air Pollution?

Step 1: Check the Regional Air Quality Index

Check AirNow.gov regularly or download the AirNow App for iPhones and Android especially if you or members of your family have heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or asthma. Just type in your zip code and daily air quality forecasts are available. Although community- specific data is not available, regional data is helpful to keep yourself safe.



Step 2: Avoid Heavy Traffic

Negative health outcomes from air pollution tend to increase as the amount of time a person spends close to car and truck traffic increases. Try to reduce the amount of time you spend close to or sitting in traffic. If you have a car, the next time you are sitting in traffic, set the fan to re-circulate instead of pulling polluted air from outside. On a similarly related note, if you find yourself idling your car when you don't have to, turn it off instead as this decreases pollution. Try to carpool, walk or use public transportation more.

Step 3: If You Exercise Outside, Workout in the Morning

The pollutant ozone tends to be low early in the day. Additionally, when you exercise, you breathe air (and air pollution if it is present) deep into your lungs. So, if you normally exercise outside, avoid rush hour traffic which can expose you to nitrogen oxides and particulate matter and avoid exercising in the afternoon especially in the summer as these time periods are when ozone pollution is the highest. Do not exercise within 400 meters of a busy road.

Step 4: Plant Trees

Trees and other plants assist with air pollution because they help to capture pollution like particulate matter (PM), ozone and sulfur dioxide and settle out particles like dust, smoke, pollen and ash.



Step 5: Spread the Word

Let your family and friends know how they can protect themselves from air pollution and about common sense steps like not smoking, avoiding cigarette smoke and reducing energy use. Volunteer with the Southeast CARE Coalition or write a short letter to the editor to the Daily Press to raise awareness about air quality in the Southeast Community.

Interested in volunteering to help clean up our air? Flip for contact information.