



Colorado Department
of Public Health
and Environment

*"To protect and improve
the health and environment
of the people of Colorado."*

NEWS

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**Cleaner School Buses Take to Denver-Metro Area Roads;
Annual Wintertime High Pollution Season Kicks Into Gear on November 1**

DENVER – School buses in the St. Vrain Valley School District will deliver both students and improved air quality in North Boulder County this winter, according to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

An effort to significantly reduce emissions from school buses coincides with the start of the Department of Public Health and Environment's annual wintertime High Pollution Advisory Program. Meteorologists from the department's Air Pollution Control Division will issue the first red or blue advisory of the 2004-2005 High Pollution Advisory Program at 4 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 31.

The first advisory takes effect at midnight on Nov. 1. Subsequent advisories will be issued daily at 4 p.m. and remain in effect for 24 hours. The five-month long season concludes on Thursday, March 31, 2005.

Red advisories, which indicate that air quality conditions could lead to air pollution levels above federal and/or state standards, trigger mandatory residential burning restrictions and voluntary driving reductions. Burning is limited to approved fireplaces, wood stoves, pellet stoves and masonry heaters in the seven-county Denver-metropolitan area.

Blue advisories require no public action. However, residents are urged to consider using alternate modes of transportation whenever possible during the 2004-2005 High Pollution Season.

In the St. Vrain Valley School District, dozens of buses will be outfitted with oxidation catalysts to significantly reduce emissions. The district also will install some anti-idling block heaters, implement a biodiesel fuel program, and create driver and family education and training programs as part of the approximately \$150,000 project.

Program funding is provided by a supplemental environmental project included in an agreement signed earlier this year between the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and Cemex, Inc. over air pollution violations at the company's Lyons facility. Portions of negotiated settlements in cases where environmental laws have been violated often are targeted for funding supplemental environmental projects. The intent is to benefit communities harmed by the violations.

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The St. Vrain Valley School District project is expected to reduce harmful emissions by more than four tons per year. That includes an 11 percent reduction in carbon monoxide emissions and a 21 percent reduction in volatile organic compound emissions from the retrofitted buses.

The district also received funding from the Regional Air Quality Council as part of its Clean Yellow Fleets for Blue Skies project, which will retrofit between 850-1,250 school buses with pollution reduction technology and fund the purchase of lower-polluting diesel fuel. The council's project, announced earlier this week, involves 16 school districts along Colorado's Front Range.

The Regional Air Quality Council also is a valuable partner in the Department of Public Health and Environment's wintertime High Pollution Advisory Program, helping to inform residents and municipalities in the seven-county Denver-metropolitan area about the current advisory.

The program area is defined as the seven Denver-metropolitan area counties, including Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas and Jefferson. The only exceptions are for residences above 7,000 feet in elevation in parts of Boulder, Douglas and Jefferson Counties, and residences east of Kiowa Creek in extreme eastern parts of Adams and Arapahoe Counties.

Each red or blue advisory includes the current maximum air pollution concentration and visibility readings in the metropolitan area, as well as the highest readings for the day. Each advisory specifies which pollutant is responsible for the day's current high and maximum high readings, where those readings were recorded, and provides a pollution outlook for the advisory period.

The most troublesome wintertime pollutants are carbon monoxide and particulate matter.

Carbon monoxide emanates primarily from automobile exhaust and is produced during the incomplete combustion of organic fuels. Carbon monoxide affects the central nervous system by depriving the body of oxygen. It can reduce a healthy person's ability to perform tasks like jogging or running. Sensitive persons like those with cardiovascular disease, angina patients and pregnant women can be affected more negatively.

Particulate matter refers to particles, regardless of chemical composition, that are small enough to become airborne and subsequently inhaled. They can become imbedded in a person's respiratory tract and lungs and cause respiratory damage. The smaller the particle, the more deeply it can penetrate.

Most major Denver-metropolitan area media outlets include each day's advisory in some form in weather segments, on weather pages, in news briefs, as part of traffic reports, or in daily calendars and/or digests. The Air Pollution Control Division also maintains two telephone hotlines, 303-758-4848 and 303-782-0211, to provide the public with air quality information. The hotlines are updated with newly recorded messages daily.

Additionally, Internet users can log onto <http://apcd.state.co.us/psi/advisory.html> any time for the current advisory and current air pollution conditions recorded at any of several monitors located throughout the metropolitan area. Data is updated automatically each hour, 365 days a year.

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Internet users also can select options that will display bar and line graphs for specific air pollutants to investigate daily and day-to-day trends at a given site, and reports that compare air pollution levels site-to-site. Information is archived.

A wide variety of web pages commonly accessed by Internet users have linked their pages to the current on-line advisory information. Instructions on how to link a website to the on-line advisory information are available at <http://apcd.state.co.us/psi/banners.html>, or add the following code to your page:

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<a href="http://apcd.state.co.us/psi/advisory.phtml">  
<img src=http://apcd.state.co.us/psi/adv.gif alt="Click for AQI advisory" border=0></a>
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Last winter, 91 blue and 61 red advisories were issued during the five-month season. One advisory period was split, meaning red until midnight and blue thereafter. The previous winter, 100 blue and 52 red advisories were issued. Typically, the breakdown for an entire season is about two-thirds blue, one-third red.