

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 28, 2010

Contact: Lisa MacKinnon, Project Coordinator, (608) 266-9063 or (608) 335-5193 (cell)

Dane County Shows Improvement on Some Air Quality Measures But Needs to Continue Efforts for Healthier Air According to American Lung Association's *State of the Air 2010* Report

The American Lung Association (ALA) released its *State of the Air 2010* report today, showing that Dane County's air quality "grade" has improved since last year's report. The report finds that across the nation, "a decade of cleanup measures to reduce emissions from coal-fired powered plants and the transition to cleaner diesel fuels and engines have paid off in cutting levels of deadly particle and ozone pollution, especially in eastern and midwestern U.S. cities." The report, found at www.stateoftheair.org, provides an annual national air quality "report card," based on the color-coded Air Quality Index (AQI), to assign grades to counties.

The 2010 report, based on data from 2006-2008, gives Dane County a grade of "C" for ozone and an "F" for fine particle pollution levels for having an average of 5 high ozone days and 12 high particle pollution days (days in the "orange" or "unhealthy for sensitive groups" AQI category) during that period. In comparison, the 2009 *State of the Air* report issued Dane County "F" grades for both ozone and fine particle pollution based on 2005-2007 data showing 10 and 14 high ozone and particle pollution days, respectively. And the 2007-2009 pollution levels for Dane County show further improvements (for instance, Dane County had no 8-hour ozone "exceedance" days in 2009).

"This latest report reflects what the Dane County Clean Air Coalition has been conveying to the public over the last several years. While these grades don't put Dane County at the top of the class for clean air, Dane County's air quality has been improving over the last few years and currently meets state and federal standards", said Lisa MacKinnon, Coordinator for the Dane County Clean Air Coalition. "But, as the county continues to grow and U.S. EPA continues to create more stringent public health standards for air quality, we all need to step up our actions for healthier air. And 2010 will be a critical year for Dane County because the U.S. EPA is getting ready to create even more strict public health standards for both ozone and fine particle pollution."

MacKinnon credits a number of voluntary emission reduction actions on the part of Clean Air Coalition members and the public -- such as reductions in coal burning for electric generation, energy conservation measures and cleaner transportation choices -- for some of the improvements, and urges Dane County residents and business to continue these efforts. "We ask residents, businesses, government agencies and institutions in the County to join us in taking further voluntary actions that will reduce fine particle and ozone emissions, protect the health of local residents and help ensure that Dane County continues to comply with all federal air quality standards. We can all do our share for healthier air," said MacKinnon.

-MORE-

By taking voluntary actions today, residents, businesses and local governments can help avoid the possibility of more drastic mandatory federal regulations costing consumers and businesses millions of dollars in the future. Since the establishment in 2008 of a stricter federal health-based standard for fine particle pollution, Dane County has come closer to the threshold for being declared a “non-attainment area” for fine particle air pollution. Fine particles are very small particles with diameters less than 2.5 microns (about 30 times smaller than the diameter of a human hair). Due to their small size, fine particles are easily inhaled and are deeply deposited into the lungs, which can aggravate and even cause serious health problems such as heart and lung disease.

Over half of Dane County’s air pollutants come from our cars and trucks, as well as other gasoline and diesel engines that power everything from construction equipment to leaf blowers. These and other combustion activities, such as electrical generation, are also the source of ozone emissions.

Simple Steps You Can Take to Reduce Ozone and Fine Particle Pollution

Reduces Both Pollutants:

- Join a car/vanpool or locate convenient biking or walking routes near you with the help of Rideshare: See <http://www.ci.madison.wi.us/rideshare/>
- Ride the Metro Transit bus to work or other destinations: See <http://www.cityofmadison.com/metro/> or call 266-4466 for trip planning assistance.
- Combine errands and reduce trips.
- Don’t let engines idle -- It gets 0 MPG!
- Conserve energy at home and work by turning off unnecessary lighting, computers and other electrical devices when not in use. Set your thermostat lower in the winter and higher in the summer.

Reduces Ozone Specifically:

- Use low emission gas cans.
- Refuel your vehicle after dusk, if possible.
- Reschedule or delay lawn mowing using gas-powered equipment until after 6 p.m.

Reduces Fine Particles Specifically:

- Open burning and use of burn barrels should be avoided.
- Avoid use of outdoor wood burning boilers and fireplaces.
- If you use a wood burning stove, make sure it is an efficient model; burn small hot fires with dry, seasoned wood.

For more information on what you can do for healthier air, visit the Dane County Clean Air Coalition website at www.healthyairdane.org.

End