

## Communications Office

Peterborough County-City Health Unit  
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[www.pcchu.ca](http://www.pcchu.ca)



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# Health Unit Says Smog Days Cost Lives

## *Residents Urged to Avoid Air-Polluting Activities*

**Monday, June 15, 2009, Peterborough**

As the blazing days of summer draw near, the Peterborough County-City Health Unit is advising local residents to curb activities that contribute to air pollution because poor air quality costs lives in our region.

“According to the Ontario Medical Association’s Illness Cost of Air Pollution model, in 2008 there were an estimated 119 premature smog deaths in the Peterborough region,” said Dr. Rosana Pellizzari, Medical Officer of Health at the Peterborough County-City Health Unit. “These figures show that smog has a very real impact in our region, so we advise the community to be extra vigilant when the warmer weather arrives to take the necessary precautions and avoid adding more pollutants to the air.”

During a Smog Alert, the public is advised to take precautions to minimize exposure to air pollutants and to refrain from activities that could worsen air quality. Those at particular risk include young children, the elderly, asthmatics and anyone with existing respiratory or heart disease. The following is suggested to protect those most affected by smog:

- Avoid strenuous exercise and limit outdoor activities
- Reschedule or plan outdoor activities for early in the morning when pollutant levels are considerably lower
- Keep away from high traffic areas to reduce exposure to vehicle exhaust
- Stay inside in a cool air-conditioned or well-ventilated environment
- Drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration
- Seek medical attention for those complaining of symptoms such as tightness in their chests, coughing, wheezing or shortness of breath, excessive weakness or fatigue

Individuals and businesses can make a big difference in helping to reduce smog levels, including:

- Limit the use of cars: Walk, cycle, carpool or take public transit
- Telecommute (work from home) and teleconference whenever possible

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- Reduce unnecessary engine idling of your vehicle at all times
- Restrict the use of oil-based paints, solvents, pesticides, glues, gas-powered engines (such as lawnmowers and leaf blowers) and barbecues
- Conserve energy: Turn down the air conditioner and turn off lights you are not using. Use energy efficient light bulbs. Install low-flow showerheads and aerators in faucets to conserve water

Dr. Pellizzari explained that the Peterborough city and county are part of the Great Lakes region smog belt, where lung and skin cancer rates are higher than Ontario averages. Last year, the province's Air Quality Index (AQI) reported that the Peterborough area had 53 days of moderate air quality (AQI of 32-49), and three poor quality days (AQI of 50-99), according to the Ministry of the Environment (MOE).

The AQI is a rating scale that measures outdoor air quality in Ontario. The AQI translates pollutant levels into numbers to determine whether the air quality is considered to be "good," "moderate" or "poor." Generally, the lower the AQI, the better the air quality.

The AQI program is managed by the MOE, which conducts hourly readings of the most common air pollutants year-round at 36 sites province-wide and provides as many as six public reports per day during May to September. A Smog Alert is declared if forecasts indicate the AQI may exceed a reading of 50 in a given geographic area.

For more information about smog in the Peterborough area, please visit <http://www.pcchu.ca/HH/HH-smog.html> .

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### For further information, please contact:

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