

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**MARYLAND'S AIR QUALITY REPORT CARD: STATE STILL AMONG
MOST POLLUTED IN U.S.**

*American Lung Association State of the Air: 2007 Finds Need for Tighter Restrictions Locally and at
National Level*

Hunt Valley, Maryland (May 1, 2007)— Maryland's air scores poorly, according to the American Lung Association's annual air quality report card, *State of the Air: 2007*. Most parts of Maryland suffered worsening levels of particle pollution, as did most areas east of the Mississippi River, but measured modest improvements in ozone (smog) from the previous report. For the first time since the American Lung Association began issuing its annual air quality report card in 2000, data reveal a split picture along either side of the Mississippi River, as particle pollution—the most dangerous pollutant—increased in the East but decreased in the West, while ozone decreased nationwide from peaks reported in 2002.

“Our improved ozone grades in some counties are certainly good news, but the increased particle pollution is a particularly troubling trend,” said Stephen Peregoy, President and CEO of the American Lung Association of Maryland. “As a region, we certainly still have a long way to go to have air that is safe for everyone to breathe. Science clearly shows that air pollution is dangerous—even deadly—and needs to be curbed drastically.”

Nationwide, the number of counties scoring an “A” grade for ozone levels increased from 82 in 2000 to 145 this year. However, particle pollution levels show an ominous trend, with F grades nearly doubling in just one year. Particle pollution levels rose in the eastern U.S. because heavily polluting power plants generated more electricity. In the West, by contrast, soot levels continue to drop even in areas that rank historically high in particle pollution. California showed the most improvement, with 32 counties dropping their year-round particle pollution levels.

Ozone pollution dropped thanks to a late 1990s requirement to clean up emissions of the raw ingredients of smog, as well as cooler summers in 2003 and 2004. Smog levels stayed down even when the heat returned in summer 2005 in much of the East thanks to controls put in place by 2004 on nitrogen oxide emissions from coal-fired power plants. In the West, particularly in California, aggressive measures to reduce emissions from a wide range of air pollution sources (including cars and trucks) contributed to fewer high ozone days.

“The good news is that there's less ozone here and throughout most of the United States. Yet, we remain concerned because the science shows that millions are still at risk from ozone pollution,” Peregoy said. “Breathing ozone smog creates serious health risks, including new evidence that links it to premature death,” he said. “So to really protect Marylanders from ozone smog, we need EPA to set new standards for ozone at levels that would protect public health as the Clean Air Act requires.”

The *American Lung Association State of the Air: 2007* ranks cities and counties most polluted by ozone,

24-hour particle pollution, and annual particle pollution, and reports county-by-county populations at risk from unhealthful levels of the most dangerous forms of air pollution.

While air pollution is unsafe for everyone, some people are at increased risk because of their age or health situation. Those groups include people with asthma, adults 65 and older, children under 18, people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD – chronic bronchitis and emphysema) and anyone with cardiovascular disease or diabetes.

Ozone and Particle Pollution Snapshots in Maryland

According to the report, of the eleven counties in Maryland that have air quality monitoring for ozone, six received a grade of “F,” three received a “D” and only two counties received a grade of “C.” Of the eight counties that monitored 24-hour particle pollution, three counties received an “F,” two a “D” and three counties received a “C.” In the areas where data was collected on annual particle pollution, four counties received a “PASS” grade, while three received a “FAIL” and one was incomplete. No Maryland county received a grade higher than “C” on any air pollution analysis. In addition:

- 1 The Washington-Baltimore-Northern Virginia corridor ranked the 11th most polluted by short-term (24 hour) particle pollution in the U.S. and 20th most polluted by year-round (annual) particle pollution. Last year the DC-MD-VA corridor was ranked slightly better than this year, at 12th and 21st, respectively, in those categories.
- 2 The DC-MD-VA corridor is ranked 11th worst in the nation for most ozone polluted area. Last year the ranking was only slightly better at 12th.
- 3 Baltimore City continues to be ranked among the most polluted by both short term and long-term particle pollution, ranking 14th and 24th, respectively.
- 4 Harford County is ranked 21st most ozone-polluted county in the nation and the most polluted by ozone within the state of Maryland.

Nationwide, 46 percent (136 million people) of the U.S. population lives in 251 counties where they are exposed to unhealthful levels of air pollution in the form of either ozone or short-term or year-round levels of particles. About 38.3 million Americans – nearly 1 in 8 people – live in 32 counties with unhealthful levels of all three: ozone and short-term and year-round particle pollution. One-third of the U.S. population lives in areas with unhealthful levels of ozone, a significant reduction since the last report when nearly half did, yet that still means 99 million Americans live in counties with “F” grades for ozone.

Roughly one in three (more than 93.7 million) people in the United States lives in an area with unhealthful short-term levels of particle pollution, a significant increase since the last report, which is only partially due to the new, slightly lower threshold of unhealthful air recognized in this report (based on the newly adopted national standards). Nearly one in five (more than 54 million) people in the United States lives in an area with unhealthful year-round levels of particle pollution.

Los Angeles ranked as the most polluted city in the nation for all categories in the report, even though pollution levels there have dropped. Other cities ranking among the worst for ozone include several in southern California, as well as large cities in Texas and on the east coast, including Houston, Dallas, New York, Washington, DC, and Philadelphia. Other cities on the lists of the worst for particle pollution include many in the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic states, including Pittsburgh, Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, Washington, DC-Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York.

With ozone pollution dropping in the eastern U.S., several cities returned to the list of most polluted cities despite improved ozone levels, including Atlanta, Phoenix, and Baton Rouge. They reappeared because of greater improvements by other cities. Some cities moved up to the worst cities for ozone list for the first time, including Las Vegas, Milwaukee and Kansas City.

“The American Lung Association is fighting for tougher federal standards because they protect Americans from dangerous levels of air pollution,” Peregoy said. “In addition, we’re working at the local level by supporting legislation like the Clean Cars Act which was recently signed by Governor O’Malley to help curb pollution from vehicles in our state.”

Marylanders can learn more about air pollution and ways to help reduce levels. To minimize exposure to ozone and particle pollution, the Lung Association of Maryland recommends:

- 1 Check local air quality forecasts. You can find these by going to www.epa.gov/airnow/.
- 2 Avoid exercising outdoors when pollution levels are high, or substitute an activity that requires less exertion.
- 3 Avoid exercising near high-traffic areas.
- 4 Don’t use fireplaces and wood-burning stoves.
- 5 Support legislation to reduce pollution levels, including the Clean Air Act.

For more information on how our community and others nationwide rank in the *State of the Air: 2007* report, go to: www.lungusa.org

The American Lung Association of Maryland is the leading organization in Maryland working to prevent lung disease and promote lung health. With the generous support of the public, the American Lung Association of Maryland is “Improving life, one breath at a time.”

For more information about the American Lung Association of Maryland or to support the work it does, call 1-800-642-1184 or log on to www.marylandlung.org

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