



Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District  
14306 Park Avenue, Victorville, CA 92392  
(760) 245-1661

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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For further information contact:

Violette Roberts, Community Relations & Education Manager

Mojave Desert AQMD (760) 245-1661 ext. 6104

**2015 Air Quality Report from California's Air Pollution Control  
Officers Documents Ongoing Trend Toward Cleaner Air  
High Desert Air Quality Improves Despite Drought's Effects**

Victorville – The California Air Pollution Control Officers Association (CAPCOA) today released its annual report, *California's Progress Toward Clean Air*, reporting air quality data and program highlights for all 35 local air districts in the state. The report demonstrates a long-term trend of air quality improvement as well as challenges that remain in meeting health-based air quality standards in the future.

The report compiles the latest air quality data from 2014 and presents it in an accessible format, helping the public understand how statewide air has improved over time.

The report reveals that since 1990, California's population has increased by 29 percent, the number of vehicles on California roads has increased by 32 percent, and the economy has grown by 83 percent, yet statewide emissions of smog-forming pollutants have decreased by over 50 percent;

While the report also indicates that the drought has significantly impacted levels of fine particulates in many California regions, the percentage of days exceeding the 24-hour federal standard for fine particulate matter (35 micrograms per cubic meter) decreased from 0.3% between 2000-2002 to 0% between 2012-2014 in San Bernardino County's High Desert. PM<sub>2.5</sub> is primarily formed in the atmosphere from gases such as sulfur dioxides, nitrogen oxides and VOCs, and is also directly emitted into the air from fuel combustion, and as fugitive dust.

"Our planning and conservation efforts are reaping dividends in the form of cleaner air for High Desert residents," commented Eldon Heaston, Executive Director of the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District adding that, "We do have some serious challenges ahead in meeting stricter health based standards." The MDAQMD is the local regulatory agency for the High Desert portion of San Bernardino County and Riverside County's Palo Verde Valley.

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The District is responsible for regulating stationary air pollution sources and implementing state and federal air quality rules within its 20,000 square mile jurisdiction, which is home to over half a million residents.

The High Desert region also made remarkable strides in reducing concentrations of ozone - the main component of photochemical smog - between 2000 and 2014. According to the report, 25.6% of days between 2000 and 2002 exceeded the federal 8-hour ozone standard (75 parts per billion), while from 2012-2014, this number plummeted to only 14.2% of days Districtwide.

Although there is an ongoing trend of air quality improvement across the state, the federal government has recently proposed to strengthen the health-based standard for ground-level ozone. Achieving this more stringent standard will require further reductions of smog-forming pollutants on top of regulations that are already among the strongest in the nation.

The 68-page report contains detailed information on the state's clean-air progress and challenges, data on 2014 levels of ozone and PM2.5 around the state and descriptions of air pollution control programs at the state's air districts, including the MDAQMD.

For a copy of California's Progress Toward Clean Air, visit [www.mdaqmd.ca.gov](http://www.mdaqmd.ca.gov).

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