

**Subject: AIR QUALITY HEALTH ALERT PLAN**

**Regulation Identifier: HSV-04**

**Office: HEALTH SERVICES**

**Reference:**

**To: All Staff**

**Date: June 2016**

**Reissued By: Don Schmidt**

**District Air Quality Health Alert Plan Air Quality Concerns**—Ground-level ozone is the most common air quality problem in Bexar County. Ozone pollution is a daytime problem when temperatures are high, sunshine is strong, and winds are weak. When this occurs, ozone can accumulate to unhealthy levels, especially for people with respiratory and/or asthma conditions who are participating in strenuous outdoor activities. The school district has developed a plan to respond to high concentrations of ground-level ozone. The school district receives **Air Quality Alerts** from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and the Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG). When it is predicted that the ground-level ozone will reach unhealthy levels, employees will be notified by e-mail of the ozone warning level of Orange or Red. Red Alert Days, the most hazardous days we experience in our area, seldom occur, but require limitations of student exposure to the air outside the campus buildings. Based upon the ozone warning level, certain outdoor activities, such as physical education or recess, will be curtailed for some or all students. It is important for parents to understand that the decision to limit outdoor activity will be based upon information provided to the District by parents and medical providers of the student.

**Asthma Action Plan** should be in place for each student who has respiratory problems and/or asthma and requires school interventions or restrictions. A student’s family physician will be requested to complete an Asthma Action Plan, and should provide the recommended interventions or restrictions they recommend and confirm with a signature. The campus nurse is responsible for maintaining records and providing a list for teachers of their students who have respiratory and/or asthma conditions. The nurse instructs staff as to precautions and interventions for students. Teachers responsible for ROTC, band, dance and spirit organizations, middle school coaches and high school athletic trainers must meet with the campus nurse and review all Asthma Action Plans for students participating in their organizations.

### Air Quality and Outdoor Activity Guidance for Schools

Regular physical activity — at least 60 minutes each day — promotes health and fitness. The table below shows when and how to modify outdoor physical activity based on the Air Quality Index. This guidance can help protect the health of all children, including teenagers, who are more sensitive than adults to air pollution. Check the air quality daily at [www.airnow.gov](http://www.airnow.gov).

Air Quality Index	Outdoor Activity Guidance
 <p data-bbox="115 1656 321 1713">UNHEALTHY FOR SENSITIVE GROUPS</p>	<p data-bbox="404 1528 1370 1556">It’s OK to be active outside, especially for <b>short activities</b> such as recess and physical education (PE).</p> <p data-bbox="404 1579 1490 1640">For <b>longer activities</b> such as athletic practice, take more breaks and do less intense activities. Watch for symptoms and take action as needed.*</p> <p data-bbox="404 1663 1386 1690">Students with asthma should follow their asthma action plans and keep their quick-relief medicine handy.</p>
 <p data-bbox="115 1871 245 1898">UNHEALTHY</p>	<p data-bbox="404 1757 1105 1785">For <b>all outdoor activities</b>, take more breaks and do less intense activities.</p> <p data-bbox="404 1808 1393 1835">Consider moving <b>longer or more intense activities</b> indoors or rescheduling them to another day or time.</p> <p data-bbox="404 1858 865 1885">Watch for symptoms and take action as needed.*</p> <p data-bbox="404 1908 1386 1936">Students with asthma should follow their asthma action plans and keep their quick-relief medicine handy.</p>

 <p>VERY UNHEALTHY</p>	Move <b>all activities</b> indoors or reschedule them to another day.
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**\* Watch for Symptoms**

Air pollution can make asthma symptoms worse and trigger attacks. Symptoms of asthma include coughing, wheezing, difficulty breathing, and chest tightness. Even students who do not have asthma could experience these symptoms.

**If symptoms occur:**

The student might need to take a break, do a less intense activity, stop all activity, go indoors, or use quick-relief medicine as prescribed. If symptoms don't improve, get medical help.

**Go for 60!**

CDC recommends that children get 60 or more minutes of physical activity each day. [www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/physicalactivity/guidelines.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/physicalactivity/guidelines.htm)

**Plan Ahead for Ozone**

There is less ozone in the morning. On days when ozone is expected to be at unhealthy levels, plan outdoor activities in the morning.

## Questions and Answers

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### How long can students stay outside when the air quality is unhealthy?

There is no exact amount of time. The worse the air quality, the more important it is to take breaks, do less intense activities, and watch for symptoms. Remember that students with asthma will be more sensitive to unhealthy air.

**Why should students take breaks and do less intense activities when air quality is unhealthy?** Students breathe harder when they are active for a longer period of time or when they do more intense activities. More pollution enters the lungs when a person is breathing harder. It helps to:

- √ reduce the amount of time students are breathing hard (e.g., take breaks; rotate players frequently)
- √ reduce the intensity of activities so students are not breathing so hard (e.g., walk instead of run)

### Are there times when air pollution is expected to be worse?

**Ozone pollution** is often worse on hot sunny days, especially during the afternoon and early evening. Plan outdoor activities in the morning, when air quality is better and it is not as hot.

**Particle pollution** can be high any time of day. Since vehicle exhaust contains particle pollution, limit activity near idling cars and buses and near busy roads, especially during rush hours. Also, limit outdoor activity when there is smoke in the air.

### How can I find out the daily air quality?

Go to [www.airnow.gov](http://www.airnow.gov). Many cities have an Air Quality Index (AQI) *forecast* that tells you what the local air quality will be later today or tomorrow, and a *current* AQI that tells you what the local air quality is now. The AirNow website also tells you whether the pollutant of concern is ozone or particle pollution. Sign up for emails, download the free AirNow app, or install the free AirNow widget on your website. You can also find out how to participate (and register your school) in the School Flag Program ([www.airnow.gov/schoolflag](http://www.airnow.gov/schoolflag)).

### If students stay inside because of unhealthy outdoor air quality, can they still be active?

It depends on which pollutant is causing the problem:

**Ozone pollution:** If windows are closed, the amount of ozone should be much lower indoors, so it is OK to keep students moving.

**Particle pollution:** If the building has a forced air heating or cooling system that filters out particles then the amount of particle pollution should be lower indoors, and it is OK to keep students moving. It is important that the particle filtration system is installed properly and well maintained.

### What physical activities can students do inside?

Encourage indoor activities that keep all students moving. Plan activities that include aerobic exercise as well as muscle and bone strengthening components (e.g., jumping, skipping, sit-ups, pushups). If a gymnasium or open space is accessible, promote activities that use equipment, such as cones, hula hoops, and sports balls. If restricted to the classroom, encourage students to come up with fun ways to get everyone moving (e.g., act out action words from a story). Teachers and recess supervisors can work with PE teachers to identify additional indoor activities.

### What is an asthma action plan?

An asthma action plan is a written plan developed with a student's doctor for daily management

of asthma. It includes medication plans, control of triggers, and how to recognize and manage worsening asthma symptoms. See [www.cdc.gov/asthma/actionplan.html](http://www.cdc.gov/asthma/actionplan.html) for a link to sample asthma action plans. When asthma is well managed and well controlled, students should be able to participate fully in all activities. For a booklet on “Asthma and Physical Activity in the School,” see <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/health/resources/lung/asthma-physical-activity.htm>.

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EPA-456/F-14-003  
August 2014