



## Air Quality and Climate Change

Our air is getting cleaner, thanks to programs like stricter emission controls on vehicles and coal-fired power plants (did you know that 60 percent of North Carolina's electricity comes from burning coal?), but we have a long way to go.

On 17 days so far this summer, air pollution has been measured at code orange or worse levels somewhere in the state. Code orange means that pollution concentrations exceed federal health-based standards. So on each of these 17 days, children, asthmatics and other vulnerable individuals couldn't breathe the air without risking health damage. Repeated exposure to high ozone pollution levels, even for healthy people, can cause damage that reduces lung function for life.

Closely related to air quality is the issue of climate change. The same activities that cause most air pollution – the combustion of fossil fuels and other organic matter – also contribute to the warming of the planet. DENR is taking proactive steps to address climate change:

- Starting in 2006, the state Division of Air Quality participated in the North Carolina Climate Action Plan Advisory Group. The group's efforts to develop recommendations on how to reduce North Carolina's greenhouse gas emissions resulted in state legislation, including the recently-passed Renewable Portfolio Standard. The standard requires North Carolina utilities to use renewable energy and energy efficiency programs. Also passed by the state legislature was Senate Bill 668, which requires increased energy efficiency in existing and new state buildings.
- DENR is North Carolina's first state agency to commit to voluntary reporting of greenhouse gas emissions for all of its operations. DENR will calculate, independently verify and publicly report 2008 emissions. This commitment is consistent with DENR's strategic direction to improve air quality and respond to climate change.

So what can YOU do to improve air quality, reduce climate change and save money? Try some of the following in your job and your personal life:

- **Drive less.** You can find carpool partners and transit information at <http://www.sharetheridenc.org/>.
- If you have to drive, and have a choice, **drive the most fuel-efficient vehicle that serves your needs.**
- **Improve the energy efficiency of your home.**
- **Don't burn stuff outdoors.** It's illegal to burn anything manmade, like garbage, and even lumber and paper. You can report illegal open burning to your nearest DAQ regional office; see <http://www.ncair.org/about/regional> for locations and phone numbers.

You can find the daily air quality forecast at [www.ncair.org/airaware/forecast](http://www.ncair.org/airaware/forecast), and you can sign up to receive a daily air quality forecast directly to your e-mail inbox at <http://www.enviroflash.info/>.

Thanks for caring for the air!