

Media Contact: Maria Bernabe, (o) 310-735-9184, (c) 818-625-1810, Maria.Bernabe@lung.org

American Lung Association Air Quality Report Shows Mixed Results in Inland Empire

15th annual State of the Air 2014 report shows challenges in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties, but progress is clear

Editor's Note: Trend charts, rankings, regional fact sheets, and maps are available at www.lung.org/california

(April 30, 2014, San Bernardino/Riverside, CA) – This morning, the American Lung Association released *State of the Air 2014*, an annual report on air quality which lists both the cleanest and most polluted areas in the country. While overall the Inland Empire has shown substantial reductions in ozone and particle pollution since the first State of the Air report, this year's report shows slightly worse ozone levels in the Inland Empire compared to last year's report. State and local efforts to control emissions from cars, trucks, buses and wood smoke are helping to protect the public from smog and particle pollution, but there is still much work to do.

"The *State of the Air 2014* report shows that air pollution continues to put lives at risk throughout the state," said Hasan Bencheqroun, MD, a pulmonologist and volunteer physician of the American Lung Association in California. "The Inland Empire is home to some of the most polluted air in the country, and that means millions of residents are at greater risk for lung cancer, asthma attacks, heart attacks, and premature deaths. Progress has been made, but we must increase our efforts to cut pollution so everyone can breathe clean and healthy air."

The Los Angeles region is still ranked as the most polluted area in the nation for ozone and had slightly worse ozone pollution in reported in this year's report, which is based on monitoring data from 2010-2012. . With over 100 days of unhealthy air per year reported in each county, San Bernardino and Riverside have the highest number of unhealthy ozone days in this area and the nation as a whole.. However, both counties showed significant reductions in short-term and annual particulate pollution given its high pollution levels. This year marked also the first time that San Bernardino County received a passing grade since the release of the first *State of the Air* report in 2000.

Overall, California experienced small increases in the number of ozone polluted days compared to last year's report, but had more consistent reductions in short-term particle days and lower year-round particle levels. Specifically, of the top ten cities in the U.S. with the worst air pollution, California municipalities rank as follows:

Ozone Pollution 6 out of the Top 10	Short-Term Particle Pollution 6 out of the Top 10	Annual Particle Pollution 6 out of the Top 10
#1 Los Angeles-Long Beach-Riverside	#1 Fresno-Madera	#1 Fresno-Madera
#2 Visalia-Porterville-Hanford	#2 Visalia-Porterville-Hanford	#2 Visalia-Porterville-Hanford
#3 Bakersfield	#3 Bakersfield	#3 Bakersfield
#4 Fresno-Madera	#4 Los Angeles-Long Beach-Riverside	#3 Los Angeles-Long Beach-Riverside (tied with Bakersfield)
#5 Sacramento-Roseville	#5 Modesto-Merced	#5 Modesto-Merced
#7 Modesto-Merced	#10 San Jose-San Francisco-Oakland-Stockton	#7 El Centro

Despite these rankings, many California cities continue to show significant improvements in reducing unhealthy ozone and particle pollution. California's slow yet steady progress toward healthy air can be attributed to its strong history of leadership on air and climate policies. A combination of strict passenger vehicle emission and fuel standards, cleaner heavy duty fuels, advanced technology incentive programs and diesel engine upgrade and replacement programs have been responsible for dramatic reductions in mobile source pollution that damages our air and climate. Going forward the state's zero emission vehicle and low carbon fuels policies as well as sustainable communities planning efforts will have an increasingly important role.

"Air pollution remains a pervasive public health threat, contributing to thousands of hospitalizations, emergency room visits, and deaths every year to our most vulnerable citizens – children, the elderly and those with lung disease such as lung cancer, chronic bronchitis, or emphysema," said the Lung Association's Dr. Bencheqroun. "Cleaner air saves lives, and can lead to better health and quality of life for everyone."

Southern California's pollution problems are primarily caused by emissions from transportation sources including cars, diesel trucks and buses, locomotives and ships. Air pollution problems also are caused by emissions from oil refineries, manufacturing plants, and residential wood burning. In addition, Southern California's warm climate promotes the formation of ozone pollution, and mountains in eastern portions of the region trap pollution where it can linger for days and put residents at risks for the onset or exacerbation of lung disease.

Passenger vehicle and diesel engine controls as well as strong wood burning regulations have helped reduce air pollution, but additional efforts are needed. Key solutions to help improve the quality of air in the Inland Empire are to invest in sustainable zero- and near-zero emission freight technologies, deploy zero emission vehicles (ZEV) and fuels, maintain and enhance wood burning controls, and focus community planning on walking, biking and transit alternatives to driving.

On the federal level, the Lung Association calls on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to improve the quality of air by strengthening outdated standards for ozone pollution, cleaning up residential wood burning devices, and cleaning up power plants. The Lung Association continues also to defend the Federal Clean Air Act, our nation's bedrock clean air law. Thanks to national air pollution standards set under the Clean Air Act and the EPA enforcement of these standards, as well as California's own groundbreaking air quality policies, the U.S. has seen continued reductions in air pollution.

On the state level, California must continue to support the transition to clean, low carbon transportation technologies and fuels and a clean energy economy. "California must continue to demonstrate leadership in achieving clean and healthy air for all residents," said Dr. Bencheqroun. "This can be done by supporting innovative statewide initiatives like SB 1275 (DeLeon) that requires California to charge ahead and plan for one million electric vehicles by 2020. As individuals, we can all make a difference with efforts to reduce air pollution in our own communities. Driving less, using cleaner transportation options like hybrid cars and electric vehicles, and avoiding wood burning, can make a huge difference in improving the air we breathe." For more information on the American Lung Association State of the Air Report and a list of steps individuals can take to clean the air, the public should visit www.lung.org/california.

About the American Lung Association

Now in its second century, the American Lung Association is the leading organization working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease. With your generous support, the American Lung Association is "Fighting For Air" through research, education, and advocacy. For more information about the American Lung Association or to support the work it does, call 1-800-LUNG-USA (1-800-586-4872) or visit www.lung.org/california.