



Air Quality Forecasting Procedure

The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) administers Central Ohio’s air quality forecasting program. MORPC partners with [Sonoma Technology, Inc. \(STI\)](#) to serve as air quality forecasters for the region. The goal of the program is to provide the public with daily forecasts of air pollution concentrations in Central Ohio. Armed with this information, the public can take proactive steps to reduce their exposure to unhealthy levels of ozone and fine particulate air pollution.

Each morning, STI retrieves and reviews current weather data from the National Weather Service and air quality data from the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency’s eight near real-time monitors. To develop a daily air quality forecast, STI utilizes the current air quality information and output from several weather and air quality models to project air quality conditions in Central Ohio over the next five days. The forecast is submitted to the United States Environmental Protection Agency’s [AIRNow](#) system, which offers air pollution information for over 400 cities across the United States.

MORPC uses the [Air Quality Index \(AQI\)](#) to report daily air quality. The AQI focuses on who may experience health effects based on the level of air pollution. The AQI scale runs from 0 to 300—the higher the AQI value, the greater the health concern. When ozone and particle pollution levels are forecasted to reach above 100, air quality is considered to be Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups which include children, the elderly, and those with breathing and/or heart conditions.

Air Quality Index Levels of Health Concern	Numerical Value	Meaning
Good	0-50	Air quality is considered satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk.
Moderate	51-100	Air quality is acceptable; however, for some pollutants there may be a moderate health concern for a very small number of people who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	101-150	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is not likely to be affected.
Unhealthy	151-200	Everyone may begin to experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
Very Unhealthy	201-300	Health alert: everyone may experience more serious health effects.
Hazardous	> 300	Health warnings of emergency conditions. The entire population is more likely to be affected.

MORPC will issue an Air Quality Alert when ozone and/or high particle pollution levels are anticipated to be Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups, and air pollution levels are expected to exceed the [National Ambient Air Quality Standards](#). The alerts are issued by 3:00 p.m. the day before the levels are anticipated to be high. In rare circumstances an Air Quality Alert may be issued the same day air pollution levels are expected to exceed the standards.

If an Air Quality Alert is issued, an email will go out to nearly 2,000 [EnviroFlash](#) subscribers, a press release is sent to the local media, MORPC’s toll free hotline (1-888-666-1009) is updated, and information is posted to the MORPC website, Facebook and Twitter pages. Thanks to the great partnership with the local TV stations, the meteorologists incorporate information about the Air Quality Alert into their weather report; and thanks to another great partnership with the Ohio Department of Transportation; Air Quality Alert information is posted to their dynamic message signs over the highways.