

# Shore area fails air-quality test

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The air quality in Monmouth and Ocean counties has received failing grades for 2001 through 2003, with Ocean ranking 16th worst in the country for ground-level ozone pollution — slightly worse than last year, according to an American Lung Association report.

On Thursday, the group awarded F's for ozone pollution

in both counties and gave Ocean County a C for fine-particle pollution, according to the "State of the Air 2005" report on its Web site. Monmouth County does not have an air monitor for fine particles.

Air pollution is "all over ... it's not just us," said Carole L. Eppinger of Dover Township, a retiree who has emphysema with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. "People have to

start being concerned about the environment, and that's what it boils down to."

Air pollution levels improved in many parts of the nation in 2001 through 2003, the years covered by the annual report. But millions of Americans still faced dangerous levels of air pollution, the report says.

More than 52 percent of

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Americans live in counties with unhealthy levels of ozone or particle pollution, the report says.

The lung association is "greatly concerned about threats to one of the most effective public health laws ever passed, the Clean Air Act," including legislative proposals to roll back key provisions of the law, the report says.

Ground-level ozone, a lung irritant, forms when pollutants emitted by automobiles, industry and other sources react in bright sunshine and high temperatures, according to the state Department of Environmental Protection Web site.

All of New Jersey fails to meet a health standard for ground-level ozone, and the state must come up with plans by 2007 to meet that standard by 2010, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Web site.

Meanwhile, EPA officials

have designated Monmouth County as not meeting a national health standard for tiny but dangerous particles in the air. Ocean County is not on the EPA's list of counties considered in "nonattainment" with the standard, according to a December EPA statement on the Web.

New Jersey has until early 2008 to come up with plans to meet the fine-particle standard by 2010, the statement says.

Fine particles have been shown to cause premature death and aggravate asthma and other respiratory conditions and contribute to cardio-

vascular problems such as heart attack and arrhythmias, the statement says.

In a prepared statement released Thursday, DEP Commissioner Bradley M. Campbell said "too many residents are needlessly suffering asthma and other respiratory ailments due to our poor air quality."

"More than one-third of New Jersey's air pollution comes from out-of-state, upwind sources," he said. "The Bush administration must halt its rollbacks of critical air-quality regulations, particularly related to coal-fired power plants, and provide meaningful new air-quality protections if we are going to be able to provide our residents with the quality of air they deserve."

EPA spokeswoman Mary Mears said the lung association report shows the air is getting cleaner. The EPA is requiring pollution reductions from power plants, and "we continue to ratchet down on sources" of air pollution, she said.

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### CLEAN AIR TIPS

**REDUCE DRIVING:** Combine trips. Walk, bike, car-pool or van-pool and use buses, subways or other alternatives. Support community plans that provide ways to get around that don't require a car, such as more sidewalks, bike trails and transit systems.

**REFUEL CARS AFTER DARK:** Gasoline emissions evaporating while you fill up your gas tank contribute to ozone formation. Filling up after dark helps prevent sunlight from turning those gases into ozone.

**DON'T BURN WOOD OR TRASH:** Burning firewood or trash are among the largest sources of particles in many parts of the country. If you must use a fireplace or stove for heat, convert wood stoves to natural gas, which has far fewer emissions.

**SEND A MESSAGE TO DECISION-MAKERS:** Send an e-mail or fax urging your member of Congress to protect the Clean Air Act. Log on at [www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org) to see how easy that can be.

**SOURCE:** American Lung Association "State of the Air 2005" report on the Web.