

The Air You Breathe

Free Quarterly Newsletter from Akron Regional Air Quality Management District
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How ARAQMD Assisted with COVID Response

Many readers may not know that in addition to being contractual agents for Ohio EPA in Medina, Summit & Portage counties, ARAQMD staff are also employees of Summit County Public Health. As such, we are expected to be part of any large scale response the health department undertakes...and we certainly were part of the SCPH response to COVID! Below is a description of many of the ways ARAQMD staff participated in serving community during the last year and a half.

Public Information:

As you can imagine, there was an absolute need for information, clarification, complaint taking & following up. ARAQMD stepped up and offered staff into the mix. One of our supervisors was selected to be the COVID call center manager at its inception managing information, staffing & technology needs. The call center *just* ended formal operations on June 4th after handling over 30,000 calls!! We also had two field staff members who were reassigned for many months to work in the call center almost exclusively! They were amazing. Additionally, the air quality health educator was pulled into the Public Information team and worked the first 2 months in the command center and transitioned to helping with print material creation, social media management, and web content updates while working on regular air quality items.

Case Interviews

All ARAQMD supervisors & the Administrator spent months helping perform what we call "initial interviews" with reported COVID-19 positive community members – while balancing their air quality responsibilities. We also had several permit engineers and field staff who spent months doing this as well. They heard about more headaches, loss of smell, fevers, tummy troubles, coughs and all the other symptoms than they could have ever imagined possible! These interviews were invaluable and their compassionate work talking to very ill people was greatly appreciated.

Vaccination Clinics

If there was a vaccine clinic happening, chances are good that at least one member of the ARAQMD team was participating. If it was checking people in, going over health/ consent forms, monitoring them post vaccination or even helping get them scheduled for an appointment, we were helping. Rain, snow, below freezing temps, HOT temps or the occasional nice weather day...we were out there for the drive-thru clinics!

We are grateful to have had to opportunity to serve the citizens of Summit County directly at these clinics while continuing to serve to citizens of all three counties with our air quality work!



2 ARAQMD staff @ vaccine clinic
on a nice weather day!

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Contact Info Up-to-Date?

If we learned one thing in 2020, it's the connectedness we have through technology! We all needed adapt to the lightning fast changes required.

When the Stay-at-Home Order went into effect, Ohio EPA sent staff home and they have been working remotely since. The ability to do any in-person work changed as did access to things like letterhead & envelopes and the office mailroom. Most communication coming from OEPA (and our office) relied heavily on the email that was on file with the permits. If your contact information for a permit was not current, there's a good chance you missed a lot of communication!

If you need help updating your contact information through our office, feel free to contact your permit engineer directly or call 330-375-2480 or email araqmd@schd.org to get connected to help.

ARAQMD Resumes Complaint Investigations

s, and restricted staff from participating in any field activity for a time. As more is learned regarding safe practices for minimizing exposure risk during field activities, guidelines have been established for Ohio EPA field staff to conduct complaint investigations.

For all complaint investigations, management may revise and/or develop additional guidelines for field work based on site specific issues, statewide policies/procedures and geographic considerations related to COVID-19. Field staff must receive approval from their chain of command before conducting any complaint investigation. Complaint investigations will be conducted by the assigned inspector(s) for the geographical area or facility.

Situations involving the release of any material that presents an imminent impact to public health or the environment (for example, fire, explosions, releases to waterways, releases that impact off site populations) should be called in to the spill hotline at: 800-282-9378 to be addressed, as appropriate, by Emergency Response.

ARAQMD will follow Ohio EPA guidance for in-person complaint inspections to minimize exposure to COVID-19 for both staff and the community.

Region Anticipates Moderate Non-Attainment Status

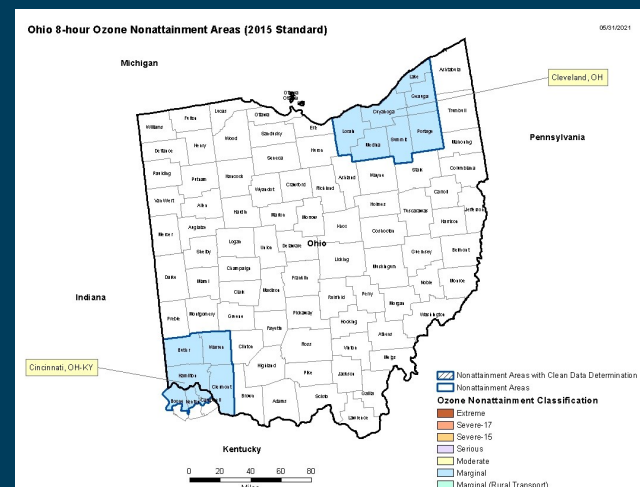
Both the Cleveland and Cincinnati regions are expected to be designated as “Moderate Non-Attainment” for the 2015 ozone standards. This is a “bump-up” in our designation...and in this case, a bump-up is not a good thing.

Ohio EPA is required by the US EPA to come up with strategies that will help these regions lower their ground-level ozone pollution. They are seeking input from Local Air Agencies and Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and representatives from other potentially effected industries regarding new strategies to help our region achieve healthier air quality specifically in regards to ozone.

Our ozone numbers have improved dramatically since the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. Businesses have met the challenge to reduce ground-level ozone creating pollution. New strategies will have to include new industries AND individuals. Here are some ideas that are currently being considered for fuller exploration:

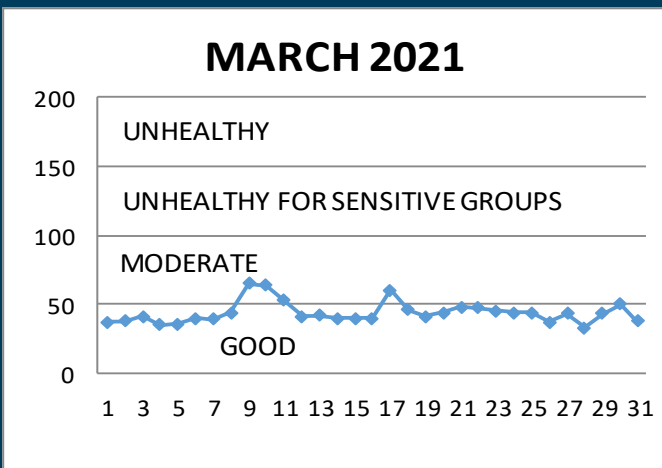
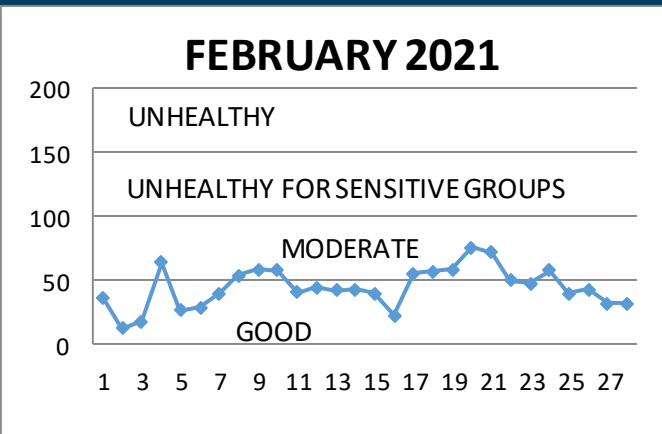
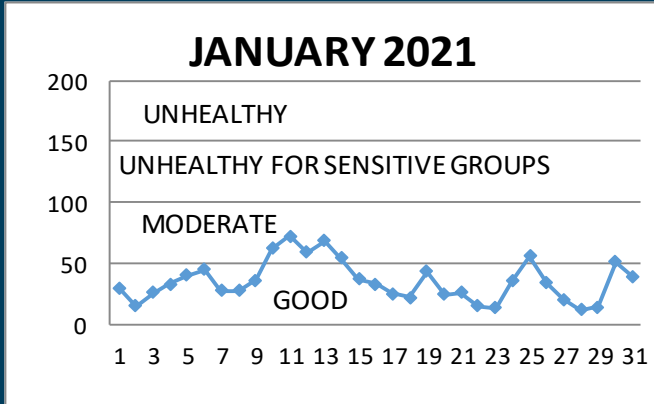
- Locomotives: Idle-limiting or shut off device requirements
- Harbor Craft: rebuild/replace engines
- Gasoline off-road engine equipment: Rebates/Discounts on electric lawn/garden equipment (like our MowGREENER initiative discussed on the back page of this publication)
- Heavy duty diesel trucks: short-term idling restrictions
- Non-road diesel construction equipment: Idle restrictions

Learn more about the whole process by following this link: <https://bit.ly/3z6k1dX>



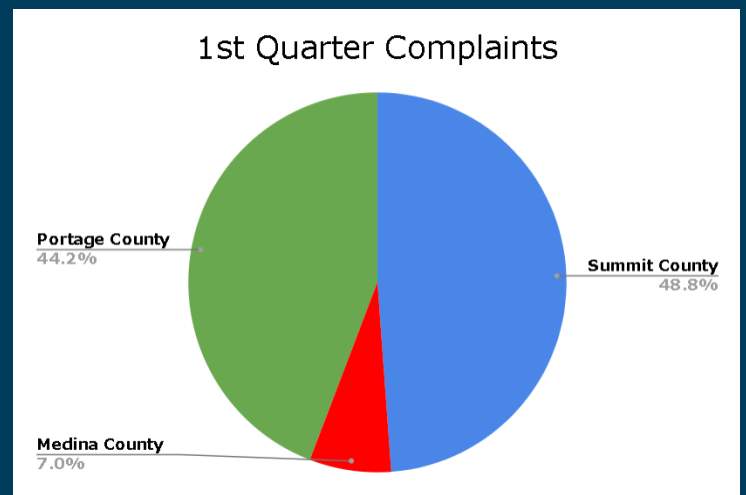
AQ by the Numbers: 1st Quarter 2021

Air Quality Index



Complaints & Inspections

Area/ Health District	Commercial/ Industrial	Residential	Total
Summit County	3	18	21
Medina County	1	2	3
Portage County	3	16	19
Kent	0	0	0



Site Visits*	1st Quarter 2021
FEPTIO	7
Title V	3
Non Title V	0
Full Compliance Evaluations	7

*virtual visits per OEPA

Additional Stats

Permits Issued							
1st Quarter 2021	Permit to Install		Permit to Install & Operate		Title V		Permit by Rule
	Draft	Final	Draft	Final	Draft**	Final	Total
**Includes - Preliminary Proposed Permits & Proposed Permits	0	2	4	51	4	1	23

Asbestos	
1st Q—Notifications	37
1st Q—Inspections	0*

*due to restrictions from OEPA



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A service of Summit County Public Health

MowGREENER 2021

ARAQMD was happy to offer our MowGREENER program again in 2021. Through a press release and Facebook advertising to our three county area, we were able to fill all 100 spaces available, and even have a waitlist established before we discontinued registration at the end of May. We were pleased to see such a robust response for our second (now hopefully annual) event.

What is MowGREENER?

MowGREENER is a program we launched last year to encourage individuals to swap out an otherwise operational gas powered lawnmower for a brand new, battery powered mower. Engines in lawn care equipment are notoriously polluting, and that is unhealthy for the operator—who has to breathe in that pollution for 45 min to an hour at a time— as well as those in the near vicinity. And, the older the mower gets, the less efficient the engine becomes, creating more pollution.

The incentive we offered to participants that provide proof of purchase and scrapping of the old mower at an approved facility was/is a \$100 Visa gift card.

We were so glad to read this from a recent gift card recipient, *“ I do want to say, thanks for doing this program - it was the main reason I went battery. I was actually looking at new gas mowers but this was enough of a bump to make the price of a battery one about the same - so I figured I'd go for it!*

While our program is full for 2021, if you are considering a battery powered mower, we think you'll really like making the switch...and you'll breathe easier!

