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VERIFY

ON THE PHONE

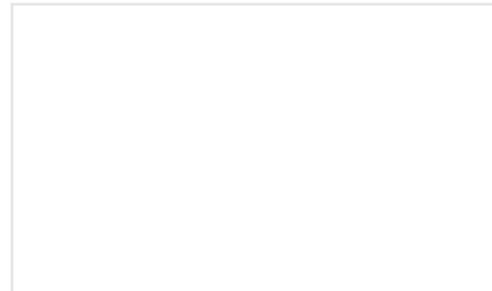
KEN FLETCHER
AMERICAN LUNG
ASSOCIATION
IN MICHIGAN

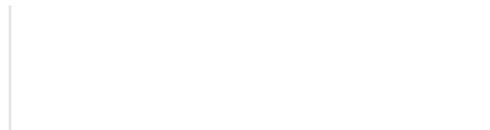
Verify: Is air quality in West Michigan getting better?

Just like students in school, air quality gets a report card -- so we decided to Verify: is the air quality in West Michigan getting any better?

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. - The American Lung Association's annual State of the Air 2018 report came out Wednesday, April 18.

With efforts to reduce air pollution in West Michigan, such as the closure of the B.C. Cobb power plant in Muskegon County, 13 On Your Side Verified: Is the air quality in west Michigan getting better?





Just like students in school, air quality gets a report card and is graded on two main things.

“One is ozone pollution, which is smog,” said Ken Fletcher, the director of advocacy with the American Lung Association in Michigan. “And then the other one is particle pollution, which is soot.”

The American Lung Association's State of the Air report uses a three year average of air pollution data from the Environmental Protection Agency.

“A lot of places in Michigan there was an uptick in ozone pollution last year,” Fletcher said. “So we’re seeing a number of counties that got worse grades this year than they did last year in the report.”

Turns out, West Michigan’s scores are detention worthy.

Take a look at the ozone grades from the report.



All but one of the counties graded in our viewing area got an “F” - grades that for the most part are worse than before.

“We're finding one of the key reasons for that was 2016 was a very hot summer,” Fletcher said. “And the ozone pollution is created by the sun reacting with the pollution coming from our cars and power plants and other sources and creating that smog.”

The Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area is tied for 34th most polluted ozone out of 227 metros graded in the nation.

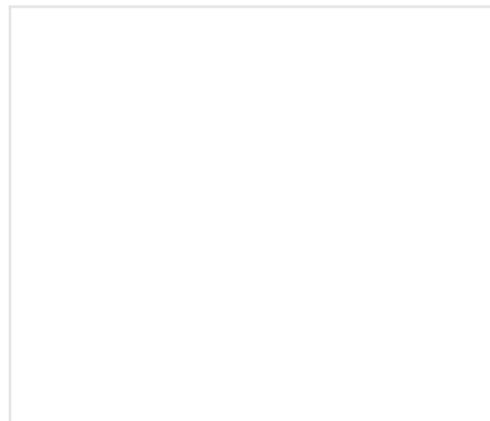
“We definitely need to make big improvements on our ozone levels,” Fletcher said.

It’s important to note over the past decades, ozone pollution has decreased nationwide.

With soot, the second area graded, there's some good news: As and Bs.

"We see that is much, much better it maintained some of its lowest year-round levels in this report," Fletcher said.

The report states: "A large concentration of cities with high levels also exists in the states lining the Great Lakes, especially Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan. While all these cities have levels that meet the national air quality standard in the U.S., all have levels above the limit recommended by the World Health Organization. Much of their high particle levels likely come from coal-fired power plants, which line the region, as well as diesel emissions from transportation sources including heavy-duty trucks, rail and marine fleets using the Lakes for transport."



"You have to deal with this pollution that's coming from whether it's Gary, Indiana, or Chicago, or other parts that drift across Lake Michigan and impacts west Michigan, same way with cars," Fletcher said. "That's why we really need national solutions."

So according to the report we can Verify: Air quality in some west Michigan counties is not getting better.

"We expect that as a result of the new ozone standard that was put into place in 2015, that later on this month the EPA will say that the Grand Rapids area is not in attainment with the national standard," Fletcher said.

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