



PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK

April 1 - 5, 2019

DAY 3: Launch of the EPA's Air Quality Flag Program

Wilmington Park Elementary School

April 3, 2019 8 am – 9 am

Air Quality in Los Angeles County

For over 50 years, California residents have been fighting to improve the quality of the air they breathe outdoors. Their efforts have been well rewarded: levels of outdoor air pollutants have fallen dramatically. Yet local disparities in air pollution and health impacts remain. Low-income communities and communities of color continue to be exposed to high levels of air pollution, other toxic hazards and poor land use – that lead to unhealthy environments.

An Environmental Justice Community

Environmental justice recognizes that the health of a community largely depends on its conditions and the fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens. The community of Wilmington is burdened by multiple sources of air pollution, including emissions from the adjacent ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, rail yards, several oil refineries and heavily-congested freeways. Wilmington is a community that is 89% Latino and has more residents living below the poverty level than Los Angeles County overall. Recent policies aimed at reducing pollution from the ports and associated goods movement has led to improved health outcomes with the greatest benefit for the most impacted areas, but there is still much work needed to address the inequity that exists for environmental justice communities such as Wilmington.

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, in collaboration with community partners and the Departments of Mental Health and Health Services, is focused on reducing emissions of harmful toxins from industrial sources in socially vulnerable communities.

This work includes:






- Engaging and partnering with community members to address environmental hazards in or near residential areas.
- Promoting timely and effective enforcement of existing regulations in the most environmentally burdened and vulnerable communities.
- Developing and supporting policies that yield health protection and risk reduction from environmental hazards.
- Expanding monitoring, assessment and reporting of health impacts from environmental exposures in all communities, especially the most vulnerable.

Air Quality Flag Program

On April 3, 2019, Wilmington Park Elementary School in partnership with Providence Wellness Center in Wilmington will launch its Air Quality Flag Program. Sponsored by the US Environmental Protection Agency, local organizations communicate current air quality conditions to protect the health of the community, including those with asthma.

Each day the school will raise a flag that corresponds to how clean or polluted the air is. The color of the flag matches EPA's Air Quality Index (AQI): green, yellow, orange, red, and purple.

On unhealthy days, the school and community can use this information to adjust exposure to air pollution.

	Green means air quality is good.
	Yellow means air quality is acceptable.
	Orange means air quality is unhealthy for sensitive groups -- people with lung disease such as asthma, children, and older adults.
	Red means air quality is unhealthy.
	Purple means air quality is very unhealthy.



Science and Action for Health
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Most importantly, by documenting unhealthy air quality, students, parents and educators can work together for policies and practices that protect air quality and mitigate exposure to harmful toxins.

This project raises the issue of Environmental Justice in a region of LA County that has been disproportionately impacted by multiple local environmental impacts, including freeways and industrial facilities.

For information on the US Environmental Protection Agency's Air Quality Flag Program, visit their website:
www.airnow.gov.

For event information contact:

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