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## EPA: N.Y., Calif. have dirtiest air in U.S.

Residents of Wyoming, South Dakota and Montana breathe cleanest air

**The Associated Press**

updated 10:59 a.m. ET, Wed., March. 22, 2006

LOS ANGELES - New Yorkers and Californians breathe in the dirtiest air in the United States and face higher cancer risks than the rest of the country, according to the latest data from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

New York's cancer risk is estimated to be 68 residents per million. In California, the risk is 66 residents per million.

The national average is 41.5 per million, according to the report, which was released in February and based on emissions of 177 chemicals in 1999, the most recent data available. The Los Angeles Times on Wednesday published an analysis of the data.

Oregon, Washington, D.C. and New Jersey had the third, fourth and fifth worst air in the nation, respectively, the EPA said. Motor vehicle exhaust was the chief culprit, though in Oregon's case smoke from forest fires and fireplaces also were a significant factor.

Rural residents of Wyoming, South Dakota and Montana breathed the cleanest air.

The EPA's The National-Scale Air Toxics Assessment evaluated toxins including heavy metals, such as lead; volatile chemicals, such as benzene; combustion byproducts, such as acrolein; and solvents, including perchloroethylene and methylene chloride.

Benzene alone contributed a quarter of the individual cancer risk identified in this assessment, the primary source of it being vehicles, according to the study.

The assessment is a screening tool that estimates cancer and other health risks from exposure to emissions of air toxics in 1999.

The assessment provides a snapshot of air quality and the risks that would result if 1999 emissions levels remained unchanged. It does not reflect reductions in air toxins that may have occurred since 1999 or those anticipated to occur in the future.

"The key thing here is recognizing that we still have a huge problem," Janice Nolen, the American Lung Association's national policy director, told the Times. "While we are headed in the right direction, we have to figure out what more we can do."

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