

③ Plain-Language Appendix G — Uniform Air Quality Index and Daily Reporting (draft of test method)

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

CONTENTS

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1. What is the AQI??
2. Why report the AQI??
3. As the designated reporting official, when must I report the AQI??
4. What goes into my AQI report?
5. Is my AQI report for my MSA only?
6. How do I get my AQI report to the public?
7. How often must I report the AQI?
8. May I make exceptions to these reporting requirements?

DOING THE NUMBERS

9. How does the AQI relate to air pollution levels?
10. Where do I get the pollutant concentrations to calculate the AQI??
11. Do I have to forecast the AQI??
12. How do I calculate the AQI??
13. How do I use Table 1 and Equation I to calculate the AQI??

BACKGROUND AND REFERENCE MATERIALS

14. Where did the AQI come from?
15. What else should I know?
16. References

1. What is the AQI?

The Air Quality Index (AQI) is a tool that simplifies reporting air pollution to the general public. The AQI incorporates into a single index concentrations of five criteria pollutants: Ozone (O₃), particulate matter (PM₁₀), carbon monoxide (CO), sulfur dioxide (SO₂), and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂). The scale of the index is divided into general categories that are associated with health messages.

2. Why report the AQI?

The AQI offers various advantages:

- a. It is simple to create and understand.
- b. It conveys the health implications of air quality.
- c. It promotes uniform use throughout the country.

3. As the designated reporting official, when must I report the AQI?

You must report the AQI daily if yours is a metropolitan statistical area (MSA) with a population over 250,000.

4. What goes into my AQI report?

Your AQI report must contain the following:

- a. The reporting area(s) (the MSA or subdivision of the MSA).
- b. The reporting period (the day for which the AQI is reported).
- c. The critical pollutant (the pollutant with the highest index value).
- d. The AQI (the highest index value).
- e. The category and color associated with the AQI. Use only the following descriptions for the seven AQI categories and subcategories:

For this AQI...	Use this description...	And this color...
0 to 50	“Good”	Green
51 to 75	“Moderate”	Yellow green
76 to 100	“Moderate” (limited health notice)	Dark green
101 to 151	“Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups”	Orange
101 to 200	“Unhealthy”	Red
201 to 300	“Very unhealthy”	Purple
301 and above	“Hazardous”	Maroon

Your AQI report should contain the following:

- a. The index values for other pollutants.
- b. The index for sub-areas of the reporting area.
- c. Actual pollutant concentrations.
- d. Causes for unusual AQI values.

5. Is my AQI report for my MSA only?

Generally your AQI report applies to your MSA only. Your report does not apply to just your MSA in two situations:

- a. If a significant air quality problem exists (AQI greater than 100) in areas next to your MSA but not in it (for example ozone concentrations are often highest downwind and outside an urban area), your AQI report should apply to these areas also.
- b. If different definable parts of your MSA have different AQI categories, you should report a separate AQI for each part of your urban area. If you do not report a separate AQI for each part, then you must include measurements from monitors that record the highest pollutant concentrations in your MSA.

6. How do I get my AQI report to the public?

You must furnish the daily report to the appropriate news media (radio, television, and newspapers). You may make the daily report publicly available at one or more places of public access, or you may disseminate it by a recorded phone message or a public Internet site.

7. How often must I report the AQI?

You must report the AQI at least 5 days per week. Exceptions to this requirement are in...

Q and A focuses the writing and leads the reader. "You" cuts down on passive voice. Requirements stand out in vertical lists and in a table that uses only horizontal lines.
