



The air we breathe

Every day we take about **26,000 breaths**, and breathe in about 14,000 litres of air (equivalent to about 150 full bathtubs).

If that air contains pollution, we breathe it into our bodies and it can affect our health.

How we are working with councils

The Ministry for the Environment reports on levels of PM₁₀ pollution in airsheds across the country using monitoring information gathered by regional councils. We publish annual summaries of these pollution levels on our website.

You can find out about PM₁₀ levels in your area by visiting www.mfe.govt.nz/state/reporting/air/nes/index.html

What you can do to make the air cleaner

- Have a look at the EnergyWise website (www.energywise.org.nz) for information on how your home heating and vehicle choices can help reduce PM₁₀ and other pollution
- For a list of wood burners that reduce PM₁₀ pollution, visit www.mfe.govt.nz/laws/standards/woodburners/authorised-woodburners.html
- For more information on air quality and health, download the *Health and Air Pollution in New Zealand* report (www.mfe.govt.nz/issues/air/programme/hapinz.html)

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New Zealand has good air quality in most places most of the time. But some places experience air pollution that can be harmful to health. Research shows that over 1000 New Zealanders a year die early because of the effects of air pollution. It's important that we improve the air quality where needed so we can help prevent those deaths and maintain the long-term sustainability of New Zealand's environment.

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Monitoring air quality

IN NEW ZEALAND

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Small particles of pollution in the air come from sources such as wood burners, car exhausts and industry. They can cause health problems, such as making breathing problems like asthma and bronchitis worse. They can make heart problems worse too.

PM₁₀ – small but deadly

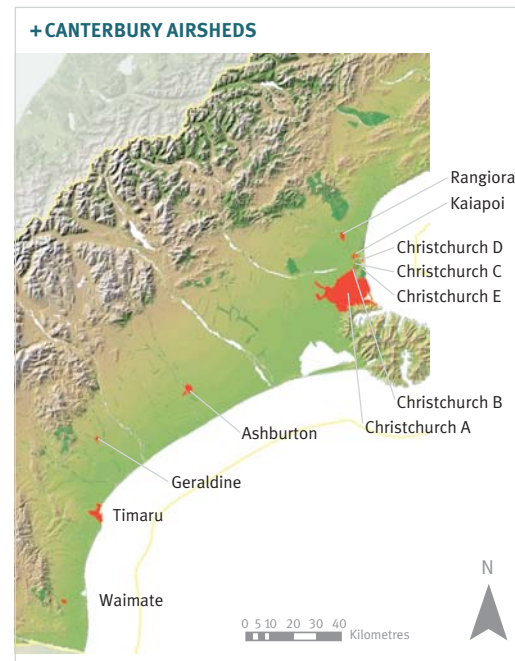
One kind of small particle that can cause health problems is called PM₁₀. These particles are too tiny to see – five particles would fit across a strand of human hair – but they can be deadly. The number of New Zealanders who die early from pollution caused by traffic is similar to the number killed in road accidents each year.

About 30 places around New Zealand have high levels of PM₁₀ each year, especially in winter when people are using fires and wood burners. Larger cities such as Christchurch are affected, but so are small towns such as Reefton that only has 990 people but has high levels of PM₁₀ in winter. Auckland also has high levels of PM₁₀ from home heating in winter and from road traffic throughout the year.

National standards for keeping our air clean

In September 2005, the Government brought in the National Environmental Standards for Air Quality to help make our air cleaner. Regional councils have identified areas where air quality may not meet the standards or may need management in the future. These areas are called ‘airsheds’.

If levels of PM₁₀ in the airsheds are higher than the limits allowed by the standards, the councils must take action to make the PM₁₀ levels lower.



Cleaning up our air

By 2013, PM₁₀ levels must be below the safe level set by the standards or councils will not be able to grant resource consents for discharges of PM₁₀. The standards say that councils must:

- monitor PM₁₀ levels in polluted airsheds
- tell the public every time there have been high levels of PM₁₀ in the airshed
- improve PM₁₀ levels by ensuring industrial activity produces less PM₁₀
- make sure that new wood burners installed in houses are clean-burning and efficient.

Councils also have plans to reduce the PM₁₀ levels in their airsheds. How they do this will depend on what is causing the pollution in their area.

PM₁₀ TESTING

Photo courtesy of Taranaki Regional Council

