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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **State of the Air 2015 – National report highlights clean air in Whatcom, Skagit counties**

Bellingham, Skagit County, and Whatcom County made the American Lung Association’s 2015 lists for cleanest places in the country for ozone pollution.

And by next year, we hope to also have the required three years of data submitted to ALA to make the lists for cleanest places for particle pollution, too.

### **What is the State of the Air report?**

The American Lung Association released its 16<sup>th</sup> annual [State of the Air report](#), a nationwide look at particle and ozone pollution. It uses data from official air quality monitors submitted by air quality agencies like ours, and it estimates respiratory disease rates to provide a comparative picture of populations at risk.

The Lung Association uses three years of data from 2,531 monitors across the country. The ALA [news release](#) does a good job of summarizing the national trends and key findings.

### **How are we doing?**

The short answer is: Great!

The air is usually very clean in most of our jurisdiction. We already knew that, but we wanted to be on the ALA map to show how well we compare with the other cities and counties in the country, so three years ago we started providing data in the format the ALA required.

As we expected, we made the list of cleanest for ozone, and we’re hoping to have enough data to make the list for particulate next year.

Bellingham is one of two cities in Washington, along with Spokane, and one of 51 cities in the country on the Lung Association’s list of cleanest cities for ozone air pollution. These cities had no monitored ozone air pollution in unhealthy ranges on the national air quality index.

If you look up Bellingham in the state lists, you will see “INC” for “incomplete” under the particle pollution headings. That’s because we haven’t quite submitted the three years of required data.

Skagit and Whatcom counties were also among the cleanest U.S. counties for ozone air pollution. In Washington, they were joined by Clallam, Clark, Pierce, and Spokane. Skagit and Whatcom got an “A” for ozone in the report, and, like Bellingham, their particle pollution data is incomplete.

## **Why aren't other parts of our jurisdiction represented?**

We know the air in other parts of our jurisdiction is just as good as it is in the areas that made the "clean" lists in the ALA report. But the report doesn't show all the information we have.

While we use very accurate monitoring equipment in all locations, not all our equipment is the type that ALA looked at for the report.

Also, ALA looked at two pollutants that are prevalent and problematic across the county: ozone and particulate. We monitor for particulate, ozone, and sulfur dioxide, depending on the potential sources of air pollution nearby.

We hope to include data from additional stations in the coming years to show off more places where air quality is great. (Yes, we're looking at you, Island County.)

If you want to take a closer look at your local air quality, our monitors continue to be the best and most accurate place to go, and if you're in our jurisdiction, your air is normally very good, even if it's not in this report. We have seven ambient air quality monitoring locations (ambient means they show us the quality of the air in the area) throughout Island, Skagit, and Whatcom counties:

[Anacortes/Downtown](#), [Anacortes/March Point](#), [Bellingham](#), [Columbia Valley/Kendall](#),  
[Lynden/Custer](#), [Mount Vernon](#), [Oak Harbor](#)

Some large industries also are required to provide us with monthly data. You can see the summaries of our monitors and the industry monitors on our [monitoring page](#). Here's the [March](#) report.

Major sources of air pollution also must report annual emissions to the atmosphere. We post those in annual [emissions inventories](#).

## **The report includes lists of "at-risk groups." What do these lists mean for our communities?**

The Lung Association projected disease prevalence for all of the counties included in the air quality lists, however it did not calculate health risks from air quality information.

So although the report didn't use air quality data to determine disease rates, the point is clear: Air quality matters to health. The report talks about health risks caused by air pollution.

Our communities, like communities everywhere, are home to healthy people and people who suffer from asthma, COPD, and other cardiovascular and respiratory diseases.

The state and federal Clean Air Acts laid the groundwork for air quality standards that protect the environment, and the health of all people, including sensitive populations – asthmatics, children, and the elderly.

We are fortunate to live in a place where the air is clean, and proud of our success in helping to keep it that way.

**More information:**

- [American Lung Association news release](#)
- [Website – plug in your zip code and read key findings](#)
- [State of the Air 2015 report](#)

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