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## **Whatcom, Skagit counties get high marks for air quality**

*Bellingham one of only 6 cities in U.S. on all "cleanest cities" lists*

Air quality in Whatcom and Skagit counties ranks among the nation's cleanest in terms of ozone and fine-particle pollution, according to a new report.

The [American Lung Association's](#) 19th annual ["State of the Air" report](#) is a nationwide look at particle and ozone pollution – two widespread air pollutants that are dangerous to public health.

Among the highlights:

- The city of Bellingham is one of only six cities in the nation on all three cleanest cities lists for ozone, year-round particle pollution and short-term particle pollution. Bellingham had zero high ozone or high particle pollution days, and was among the 25 cities with the lowest year-round particle levels, according to an ALA news release.
- Skagit and Whatcom counties are on the cleanest counties list for both particle and ozone pollution.

The report uses data from official air quality monitors submitted by air quality agencies and estimates respiratory disease rates to provide a comparative picture of risks to people's health. The report does not include NWCAA data from Island County and other area cities. NWCAA data shows overall good air quality in those areas, too.

The data used for the report is from the 2014-2016 period, so it does not include smoke from wildfires in 2017.

"The report shows how people and businesses in our area work to improve and protect air quality according to clean air standards established under state and national legislation," said Mark Buford, executive director of the [Northwest Clean Air Agency](#).

But, Buford stressed, "this is not the time to relax, to step back and be satisfied. As wildfire smoke becomes a more common occurrence, we all need to work together even harder on challenges we can control – such as residential wood smoke, industrial emissions and people's exposure to other air pollutants."

"In Northwest Washington, clean air is a key part of our quality of life. NWCAA will continue using science to make sure our air stays clean to support the health of our communities and our economy, as we've been doing for over 50 years," Buford said.

The report does have some limitations and does not show all the information NWCAA collects. ALA looked at two pollutants that are prevalent and problematic across the country: ozone and particulate. NWCAA monitors for particulate, ozone, sulfur dioxide, and carbon monoxide, depending on the potential sources of air pollution nearby.

If you want to take a closer look at your local air quality, NWCAA has seven air quality monitoring locations in Island, Skagit and Whatcom counties. Go to the Air Quality Center on our website, [www.nwcleanairwa.gov](http://www.nwcleanairwa.gov), to see real-time air quality gauges and data trends.

On the Air Quality Center, you will also see data that some large industries must provide to NWCAA.

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**The Northwest Clean Air Agency** is responsible for enforcing federal, state and local air quality regulations in Island, Skagit, and Whatcom counties. In addition to permitting and regulating industrial sources of air pollution, the agency provides services and information related to asbestos, indoor air quality, outdoor burning, wood stoves, and fireplaces. More information about the agency is available at [www.nwcleanairwa.gov](http://www.nwcleanairwa.gov).