



# HEALTH AND AIR QUALITY PROGRAM

Health and Air Quality Bulletin

November 2001

Health Canada's Health and Air Quality Program is responsible for research, risk assessments, guideline development and risk management on indoor and outdoor air pollutants and their impact on human health. Socioeconomic impacts, such as the costs to the health care system and the economy, are also examined.

Air pollutants include a variety of substances, such as:

- carbon monoxide;
- nitrogen oxides;
- sulphur oxides;
- particulate matter; and
- ground-level ozone.

These pollutants come from various sources, including cars, sport utility vehicles, lawn mowers and snowblowers, pulp and paper mills, wood combustion and electric power generation.

These substances can pollute both indoor and outdoor environments. Outdoor air pollution contributes to negative health effects ranging from increased respiratory symptoms to



hospitalizations and premature death. Research shows that children, the elderly and people with a pre-existing cardiac or respiratory illness are most at risk. The Health and Air Quality Program is working diligently to increase its understanding of indoor air and its impact on human health.

Health Canada works with numerous federal, provincial and territorial partners in its research activities. The Department also collaborates with international research and regulatory agencies to communicate research results and to develop risk management programs and strategies. By developing guidelines, standards and recommendations, Health Canada provides leadership for managing the health risks of indoor and outdoor air pollutants.

The Health and Air Quality Program also plays a role in identifying emerging risks and health issues associated with new technologies, such as alternative fuels and transportation. Our contribution helps to guide our partners in using technology that supports sustainable development. The Program's work ultimately helps Canadians maintain and improve their health and contributes to the needs of future generations.

Legislative authority for the Health and Air Quality Program comes from the *Department of Health Act*, the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act (1999)* and the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*.

## Protecting yourself

**Time it right.** Minimize physical activity near heavy traffic areas, especially during rush hour, to reduce your exposure to pollution from motor vehicles.

**Take notice.** When you hear a smog advisory, take notice – especially if you are elderly or if you have lung or heart disease. Consider indoor alternatives if you have concerns or if your child has a respiratory condition.

**Take action.** There are many things you can do to reduce the production of air pollutants. For further information, please contact:

Air Health Effects Division  
Healthy Environments and Consumer Safety Branch  
Health Canada

Visit our Web page: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/air>

Our mission is to help the people of Canada maintain and improve their health.

Health Canada

