



Air Quality Around the World ***Monterey, California – May 6, 2022***

Today is the sixth and final day of Air Quality Awareness Week focusing on Air Quality Around the World. The World Health Organization (WHO) has deemed air pollution as the greatest environmental health risk today, estimated to contribute to 7 million premature deaths annually. Among children under the age of 15, it is the leading cause of death, killing 600,000 every year.

Air pollution is described as a ‘silent killer’ because it is rarely the direct cause of death. Rather, air pollution is the world’s 4th leading *contributing cause* of early death, accounting for:

- 29% of all deaths and disease from lung cancer
- 17% of all deaths and disease from acute lower respiratory infection
- 24% of all deaths from stroke
- 25% of all deaths and disease from coronary heart disease
- 43% of all deaths and disease from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

It is estimated that 92% of the global population breathes unhealthy air. While this figure varies region to region, nowhere is without risk. The [2019 World Air Quality Report](#) found that 72.7% of people living in Europe breathe air exceeding the WHO’s PM2.5 guideline for annual exposure (< 10 µg), while 98.8% of people breathe unhealthy air in South Asia, the most polluted region globally.

High air pollution levels can cause health problems including:

- **Short-term effects:** difficulty breathing, chest pain, wheezing, coughing, general respiratory discomfort, and irritation of the eye, nose, and throat.
- **Long-term effects:** lung tissue damage, cancer, early death, and the development of respiratory illnesses such as asthma, bronchitis, and emphysema.

For more information about air quality around the world, please visit AirNow:

<https://www.airnow.gov/aqaw/around-the-world/>

For local information about air quality, please visit: <https://www.mbard.org/air-quality-and-planning>

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