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## AIR

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The association gave Eugene/Springfield an F and ranked the area as the fifth-worst polluted metropolitan area nationwide in the short-term particle pollution study but gave the county excellent marks for its low ozone pollution.

Particle pollution refers to a combination of fine solids and aerosols that are suspended in the air and can trigger reactions ranging from coughing and wheezing to heart attacks and death, according to the report.

However, the report's conclusions have proven somewhat controversial.

Kim Metzler, spokeswoman for Lane Regional Air Pollution Authority, said the results did not reflect the metropolitan area's actual pollution. The organization is responsible for measuring Eugene's air quality.

"The information in that report is wrong," Metzler said. "(The ALA) took the pollution samples from Oakridge and they didn't just lump it with the Eugene/Springfield results — they used it as the Eugene/Springfield results."

Metzler said results are probably very accurate for Oakridge, a small town in Lane County with about 1,200 households. Metzler said Oakridge often has high particulate pollution as a result of its location in a geographic "bowl" of mountains, and because many homes are heated with wood-burning stoves.

"That's not to say that Oakridge is the fifth-most short-term particulate polluted city in the country; it's just that most small towns like it don't have their air quality tested," she said.

Oregon American Lung Association employee Patrick Callahan agreed with Metzler that the results were incorrectly reported.

"The data is partially incorrect in that the Oakridge data was lumped in the Eugene/Springfield area and skewed the results so that it didn't appear that the area had the clean air it claimed to have," he said.

This year marked the first time the ALA included assessments of particle pollution in the State of the Air report, which is published annually. The report, which covers 2000 to 2002, provides the first specific county-level information on the presence of particle pollution because of accessibility to a monitoring network set up in the late 1990s.

Unlike smoke, particulate pollution

is microscopic and not visible. But the particles form a haze that hangs over polluted cities and blurs the spread of sunlight in an area. The ALA defined "short-term" as exposure to high particle pollution levels over a period of a few hours to a few days, but noted that even short-term exposure can cause health issues.

"First and foremost, short-term exposure to particle pollution can cause premature death," according to the report.

Deaths can occur on the day particle levels are high or within one to two months afterward. The report stated these deaths would not have occurred without the pollution.

Metzler said Eugene does sometimes have ozone air pollution issues in the summer.

"In general, the air is pretty good in Eugene," she said. "We meet the Environmental Protection Agency standards, but in the summer when the weather gets dry and the temperature gets up around 95 degrees or above, then we come close to the ozone pollution limit, or we bump up against it for a day or two. The air stops moving and the pollution stays."

Ozone, an extremely reactive gas, is the primary ingredient of smog air pollution and is harmful to breathe. The gas attacks lung tissue by reacting with it chemically, according to the ALA.

The raw ingredients for ozone are produced primarily when fossil fuels are burned or when fossil fuel-based chemicals evaporate. These molecules combine and form ozone when they come in contact with both heat and sunlight, according to the report.

Jennifer Boudin, spokeswoman for the Eugene office of the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, said Lane Regional Air Pollution Authority is the expert about air pollution and air quality in Eugene.

"They would know best," she said. "They gather the data for this area."

While Eugene is the second largest city in Oregon, it does not require emissions testing for automobiles or vehicles with internal combustion engines, a result of the city's good air, Boudin said.

"The reason they have those emission testing programs in Medford and Portland is because those cities have had air quality issues," she said. "Eugene's air has been clean enough that it hasn't been a factor."

Contact the business/science/technology reporter at [stevenneuman@dailyemerald.com](mailto:stevenneuman@dailyemerald.com).

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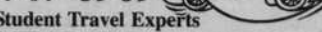
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