

# EPA Community Air Monitoring

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**EPA**  
 EPA Response to BP Spill in the Gulf of Mexico  
 Monitoring Air Quality Along the Gulf Coast

In response to the BP oil spill, EPA monitored air, water, sediment, and waste generated by the cleanup operations. Ongoing response and restoration efforts are posted to [Restoration Updates](#).

While emergency response air collection has ended, results continue to be available on this site. Air monitoring will continue to be posted to this site, and data will continue to be available from the forthcoming future.

Much of the content of this site continues to be available for historical and information purposes, but we are no longer updating these pages on a regular basis.

EPA has been monitoring the air at multiple sites on shore along the Gulf Coast. The purpose is to find high-level pollutants and assess if the air at these sites might cause health problems for people onshore in the Gulf region. EPA has been monitoring for pollutants that:

- are emitted from tank trucks of
- are emitted from containers of
- are emitted from facilities at the site.

EPA has also monitored onshore air to determine whether pollutants in the atmosphere are reaching onshore air.

**Learn about what has been done:**

On this page:

- What air pollutants have been monitored?
- Where and how monitoring has been conducted.
- What air quality data has been collected.
- Where can I find out about the air quality in the area?
- How can I get involved and provide input to EPA on this project?
- What are EPA's next steps for air quality in the Gulf of Mexico?

**What air pollutants have been monitored?**

1. Air pollutants from the oil that may BP into onshore air have volatile organic compounds (VOCs) associated with oil, gasoline, and other petroleum products. Some VOCs have a "fun" odor that may irritate your eyes, nose, or throat. VOCs in the air may lead to smog or ground-level ozone. Learn about VOCs.
 

**Learn about VOCs:** VOCs include an air pollutant class: Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) are a group of semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs) that are present in crude oil and petroleum by-products. PAHs, and other SVOCs, are "harder" to clean up than VOCs. Some of the SVOCs we would expect to find as a result of the oil spill have a "tar" look or "tar" odor.
2. Air pollutants from burning on the Gulf that would have different air quality monitoring requirements have been reported.
 

**Particulate pollution:** EPA monitors for particulate matter, also called particulate pollution. The particulate (PM) is which are smaller than 2.5 micrometers (PM2.5) and coarse particulate (PM10), which are smaller than 10 micrometers (PM10).

**Learn about particulate pollution:** Learn about an air pollutant class: Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) are a group of semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs) that are present in crude oil and petroleum by-products. PAHs, and other SVOCs, are "harder" to clean up than VOCs. Some of the SVOCs we would expect to find as a result of the oil spill have a "tar" look or "tar" odor.
3. Air pollutants from dispersants that may BP into onshore air.
 

EPA has monitored the Gulf shore air for key compounds in the dispersants used to break up oil from the spill.

  - 2-hydroxypropane-1,2,3-trisulfonic acid sodium salt
  - Dispersant group: nonyl phenol ether
4. EPA has also monitored for hydrogen sulfide (H2S) which is associated with some oil and natural gas emissions. The oil being spilled in the Gulf, however, is called "sweet" oil.

<http://www.epa.gov/bpspill/air-mon.html>

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Based on monitoring to date, EPA has not seen onshore levels of pollutants that are of significant concern for long-term health effects.