



**AIR QUALITY IN AMERICA:
A DOSE OF REALITY ON AIR POLLUTION
LEVELS, TRENDS, AND HEALTH RISKS**

By Joel M. Schwartz and Steven F. Hayward

**NEW BOOK DOCUMENTS AMERICA'S COMING VICTORY
OVER AIR POLLUTION**

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Although most Americans tell pollsters they believe air pollution in the United States is getting worse, the reality is quite different. In *Air Quality in America: A Dose of Reality on Air Pollution Levels, Trends, and Health Risks* (AEI Press, January 2008) environmental scientist Joel M. Schwartz and political scientist Steven F. Hayward demonstrate why air pollution has been dropping steadily in the past decades and why Americans can look forward to smog-free skies in the not-too-distant future.

This fact-filled reference book is the definitive analysis of air pollution data. Authors Schwartz and Hayward separate fact from myth and clear away existing misrepresentations perpetuated by advocacy groups, overzealous bureaucracies, and environmental activists.

The authors find that:

- **The nation has sharply reduced air pollution levels, despite growth in the economy, population, and “polluting” activities.** Some categories of air pollution, such as lead, have been eliminated entirely, while levels of other pollutants, such as carbon monoxide, are down by more than two-thirds.
- **Areas of the nation with the highest pollution levels have improved the most.** Los Angeles, for example, had nearly two hundred high ozone days in the 1970s but now experiences less than twenty-five high ozone days annually. Many areas of the Los Angeles basin are smog-free year round.

- **Regulators and environmental activists exaggerate air pollution levels and obscure positive trends.** Reports that large numbers of Americans breathe bad or “dangerous” air should be viewed skeptically. Many leading studies that purport to demonstrate the risks of air pollution misuse data and rely on unsubstantiated health studies.
- **Air pollution affects far fewer people, far less often, and with far less severity than is commonly believed.** Indeed, the reduction in air pollution represents one of the great public policy success stories in American history.
- **Finally, air quality will continue to improve.** New technologies and the adoption of cleaner vehicles are projected to reduce emissions by as much as 80 percent over the next two decades.

Despite the nation’s success in reducing air pollution, Schwartz and Hayward point out in *Air Quality in America* that much of the improvement has been accomplished through inefficient and costly regulations—and that the interests of regulators and activist groups are preventing a much needed readjustment of regulatory priorities and the redistribution of resources to other environmental problems.

“Not surprisingly,” Schwartz and Hayward conclude, “no matter how clean the air, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) continues to find unacceptable risks. The EPA and state regulators’ powers and budgets, as well as those of environmentalists, depend on a continued public perception that there is a serious problem to solve.”

Air Quality in America encourages policymakers to abandon scare tactics in favor of efficient, cost-effective regulations that will protect the environment without hampering American growth.

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