US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT
The School Flag Program: Resources and Strategies for Reaching out to Schools

US Environmental Protection Agency
April 11, 2013
Outline...

- Background on the flag program
- New guidance
- EPA resources
What is the School Flag Program?

- Schools raise a flag each day
- Flag colors are based on the colors of the AQI (Air Quality Index)
- The flag color indicates the local air quality forecast
- Provides guidance on how to modify outdoor activities when the air quality is unhealthy
History

- 2004- present: San Joaquin Valley starts school flag program and it expands to other States.
- 2010: EPA takes the program national to promote and maintain consistency across the country
- Today: At least 19 states participate
EPA Promotes as “4 Easy Steps”

- Purchase flags
- Educate and inform the school and community
- Check the daily air quality forecast and fly the corresponding flag
- Follow the air quality and outdoor activity guidance
Purchase Flags

- Flags cost about $100
- Funding from PTA, a local health organization or business
- Order from local flag vendor or online
- Set of five flags: green, yellow, orange, red, purple
  - Use pennant style flags, 5 x 3 ft.
  - Plain flags are best
Educate and Inform

- Educate and inform teachers and parents
- Recruit 1-2 teachers to be the Flag Program Coordinator(s)
- Inform the school and surrounding community through:
  - Newsletters
  - Emails
  - Flyers
  - Local newspaper
  - Radio station
  - Word-of-mouth
Check the Air Quality Forecast

- Sign up for an email: www.airnow.gov/enviroflash
- Check your local paper
- Local weather report on tv
- Check www.airnow.gov
  - Free air quality app
  - Free widget: post the air quality forecast on your school website
Follow the Guidance

- www.epa.gov/airnow/school_flag/school-chart-2013.pdf

- Partnered with CDC to develop
- Promote activity
- Take action to reduce exposure:
  - Be active when air quality is better
  - Do less intense activities
  - Spend less time on outdoor activity
- Pay attention to symptoms
- Follow asthma action plan
Criteria to consider in selecting areas

- Daily AQI forecast
- EnviroFlash or equivalent email alert program
- Nonattainment status
- Ability to leverage other programs (e.g., anti-idling)
- Presence of a partner group (e.g., asthma coalition)
- School advocate?
School Flag Program Website

www.airnow.gov/schoolflag

- Fact sheet
- Coordinator’s handbook
- Air Quality and Outdoor Activity Guidance
- Poster
- Press release template
- Student activities
- Teacher and student resources
- Registration form/List of participating schools
Air Quality Resources

- Resources for teachers are available on the AirNow.gov website:  www.airnow.gov
- Online curricula
- Interactive games
- Air quality simulator
- AirNow Learning Center
- Children’s picture book (free at www.epa.gov/nscep)
Website/Contact info

- www.airnow.gov/schoolflag

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