

The Good News is...

Our air is healthier today than it was 50 years ago.

We've learned a lot, including how to clean our air, and how to keep it from getting polluted. We've also made laws, like the **Clean Air Act**, that set limits on air pollution.

Smog is air that is visibly polluted. It looks brown and hazy, and occurs in the air over larger cities and towns. Most smog comes from vehicle exhaust and factory smokestack emissions.

Power plants today have devices, known as "scrubbers," that limit what comes out of their smokestacks into the air.

While still of concern, acid rain is no longer as serious a problem as it once was. Lakes and forests are recovering from the damage done by acid rain, but it will take a long time for them to fully recover.

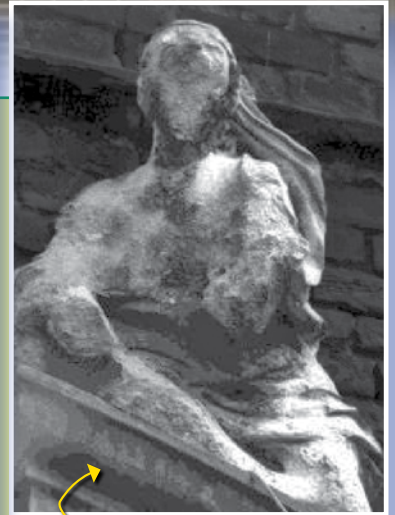


photo by Herr Schmidt-Thomsen

1908 **1968**

The first photo, taken in 1908, shows a 200-year-old statue at a castle in Germany. There were few changes during its first 200 years. After 1908, the amount of acid rain components emitted from human activities increased.

In just 60 years, the statue showed the effects of acid rain. What changes do you notice?



photo by Julia Goren

Can you spot the trees killed by the effects of acid rain?

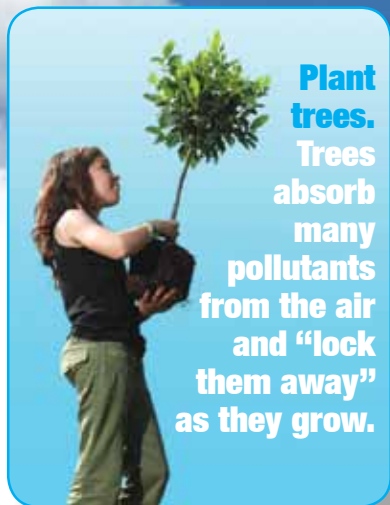


photo courtesy of NARA, photo by Gene Daniels/U.S. EPA

Ozone-damaged plant (left)
normal plant (right)

Keep the **Good News** coming...

There are lots of things you can do to keep our air clean and keep yourself healthy. They're pretty simple, too.



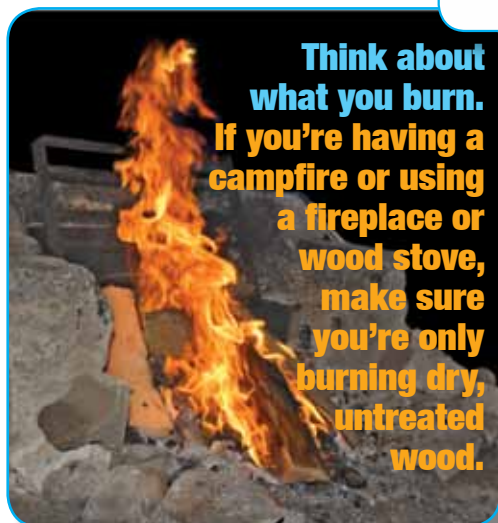
Plant trees. Trees absorb many pollutants from the air and “lock them away” as they grow.



Use less electricity. Turn off electrical devices when they're not in use.



Check the Air Quality Index each day in the summer. When the levels are safe, enjoy playing outside.



Think about what you burn. If you're having a campfire or using a fireplace or wood stove, make sure you're only burning dry, untreated wood.



Drive less. Walk, ride your bike or take public transportation to get around.

For more information:

Air Pollution by Heather C. Hudak (Weigl Publishers Inc., New York, 2007)

Air Pollution: A True Book by Rhonda L. Donald (Children's Press/Scholastic, Inc., New York, 2001)

Clean Air by Rufus Bellamy (Smart Apple Media, North Mankato, MN, 2006)

DEC's Teaching Children About Air Pollution www.dec.ny.gov/education/52185.html

DEC's Clean Air Starts at Home www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/49263.html

EPA Environmental Kids Club–Air (for grades PreK–4) www.epa.gov/kids/air.htm

EPA Student Center–Air (for grades 5–8) www.epa.gov/students/air.html

EPA's AirNow page for kids www.airnow.gov/index.cfm?action=student.main (links to Air Quality Index page for kids)

