

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

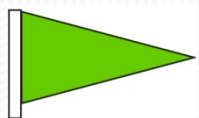


History

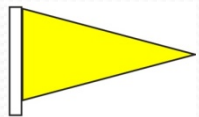
- 2004- present: San Joaquin Valley starts school flag program and it expands to other States.
- 2010: EPA takes the program national to promote and maintain consistency across the country
- Today: At least 19 states participate



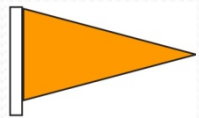
EPA Promotes as “4 Easy Steps”



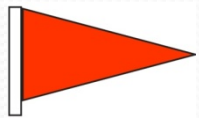
Purchase flags



Educate and inform the school and community



Check the daily air quality forecast and fly the corresponding flag

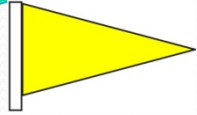


Follow the air quality and outdoor activity guidance

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

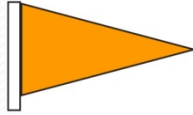




Educate and Inform

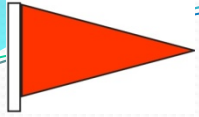
- Educate and inform teachers and parents
- Recruit 1-2 teachers to be the Flag Program Coordinator(s)
- Inform the school and surrounding community through:
 - Newsletters
 - Emails
 - Flyers
 - Local newspaper
 - Radio station
 - Word-of-mouth





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
- For questions, contact Ellen Wildermann
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