

# Steubenville: EPA test city

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Steubenville, Ohio, once known for having the most polluted air in the United States, is now known for its contributions in controlling air pollution.

For decades, the Ohio River city area was home to two large steel mills and two plants that turned coal into furnace-ready coke for the mills -- both industries that produced massive amounts of pollution. And since the Ohio River Valley area is prone to temperature inversions, much of that polluted air was frequently trapped near the ground.

But the fact the city was so heavily polluted, also made it an ideal location for environmental studies.

Starting in the 1970s, residents began participating in a program that collected medical details about their lung function and cardiac rhythms, as well as details of their lives and the causes of their deaths.

That information helped craft many U.S. Environmental Protection Agency decisions, including the first federal regulations on soot that went into effect in 1987.

As Professor Douglas Dockery of Harvard University's school of public health told The New York Times, "Steubenville provided the benchmark that we compared everything else to."

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