

EPA unveils air quality check tools

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The same technology that allows computer users to zoom in on satellite pictures of their homes is now available to learn about air quality, U.S. regulators say.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency made available Monday two tools that let computer users "see" air quality information on a virtual globe.

"Google has changed the way people use the Internet. By combining their innovative mapping tools with our air data, EPA and Google are changing the way people use the Internet to protect their health," EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson said in a news release.

The first tool is part of the new "Air Emission Sources" Web site, designed to make emissions data for six common pollutants easy to locate and understand. The site uses charts and Google Earth files to answer questions posed by users, who also can look at overall emissions, emissions by industry or emissions by largest polluter.

The EPA also is providing Air Quality Index information in the Google Earth format. People can use the AQI tool to see air quality across the country, then click on a specific location to view that city's AQI forecast and current levels of ozone or particle pollution.

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