

Study says Chinese air quality standards not yet met

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With the Olympic Games in sight, the Chinese Government is committed to improving the air quality in Beijing, and has had measures in place since 1998 which have already made a difference. However, there is still some way to go to meet national air quality standards in the Chinese capital, according to Professor Wang Wen-Xing and his team from the Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences in Beijing, in the People's Republic of China.

Wen-Xing's assessment of the quality of ambient air in Beijing has just been published online in Springer's journal, *Air Quality, Atmosphere & Health*. Since the 1980s, the rapid industrial development, urbanization and increase in traffic have resulted in severe air pollution in Beijing. And with the Olympic Games around the corner, international attention has focused on the quality of the air in the capital.

Wen-Xing and colleagues measured the concentrations of well-known air pollutants in Beijing in August and September 2007, the same summer period the Olympic Games will be taking place this year, in order to get a picture of the likely air quality during the Games. They compared their results against The National Ambient Air Quality Standard. The purpose of their study was to inform measures to improve the air quality of the capital, in anticipation of the Olympic Games.

The researchers found that average daily concentrations of sulphur dioxide and carbon monoxide were lower than the National Ambient Air Quality Standard for China. Nitrogen dioxide levels met the Standard,

whereas concentrations of ozone and inhalable particles were higher than the Standard. The concentrations of air pollutants were also higher at night than during the day. According to the authors, the main causes of this air pollution are vehicle emissions – in recent years, the number of cars in Beijing has increased sharply at a rate of 10-20% a year - and weather conditions, particularly dry air and lack of rain which hinder the diffusion and deposition of pollutants.

A series of measures such as reducing vehicle emissions, encouraging the use of public transport, eliminating polluting factories, and improving fuel quality have been in place since 1998 to reduce the emissions and concentrations of air pollutants in Beijing. These measures have already significantly reduced air pollution in the Chinese capital.

However, in comparison to other Olympic sites around the world, including Helsinki and Los Angeles, “Beijing’s air quality needs to improve” says Wen-Xing. He concludes that the Chinese Government is committed to reducing the air pollution in Beijing further, for cleaner air in time for the Games this summer.

Source: Springer

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