

China's pollution seen from space

January 17 2014



A woman wearing a face mask walks on an overpass in Beijing on January 16, 2014

Scientists said on Friday they had mapped ground-level air pollution in China from space for the first time, a feat that should help the fight against a notorious health hazard.

French and Belgian atmospheric scientists used an [infrared sensor](#) aboard a European MetOp weather satellite to map plumes of particles and [carbon dioxide](#), [sulphur dioxide](#) and ammonia over the north China

plain, blanketing Beijing, Tianjin and Hebei province in January 2013.

The experts were surprised to find the technology works, but discovered the success also depends on two conditions, France's National Centre for Space Research (CNRS) said.

There have to be "stable" weather conditions, so pollution accumulates at ground level.

There also has to be a big temperature difference between air at ground level and higher layers of the atmosphere for the warm emissions of pollution to stand out, it said.

Satellites could be a useful tool for monitoring the extent of pollution clouds and predicting their movement, according to the study published in the Geophysical Review Letters, helping authorities advise residents in time.

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Citation: China's pollution seen from space (2014, January 17) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-01-china-pollution-space.html>

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