



Welcome to the Lehigh Valley Breathes September 2024 Update!

Following our first anniversary update last month, our monitors are out there collecting data 24/7. We would like to share an article by Molly Bilinski from Lehigh Valley News that reinforces the importance of projects like LV Breathes and other air quality investigations. The link to her article is [here](#).

One of the motivations behind the Lehigh Valley Breathes project was the observation by a planning team member, Greg Zebrowski, that in his work as an educator, he had realized that a steadily increasing number of students over the years needed inhalers to improve breathing, usually as a result of asthma. As we dug deeper into the information on asthma and other respiratory diseases in the Lehigh Valley, we realized that one component of these problems was the very large increase in PM (particulate matter) 2.5 on and around our roadways and warehouses. Out of these concerns, the project was born.

Last year, almost as if to validate our decision to study PM 2.5, the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) ranked the Lehigh Valley as the worst place in the country to live for those suffering from asthma. Ms. Bilinski's article reports that this year is now the second year in a row that the Lehigh Valley has received that designation again. You can read about the designation in more detail in her article.

What we'd like to stress today are two things. First, air pollution is not the only cause of asthma prevalence. Asthma results can be worsened by lack of access to appropriate medical care, particularly specialists, pollen, tobacco use, and lack of health insurance, among other factors. Second, it is not just PM 2.5 in the air that aggravates asthma. There can be other polluting components such as smoke, ozone, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide, and methane that contribute to not only asthma but other respiratory conditions.

The Lehigh Valley Breathes project is just a step in the right direction to tackle one of the things that goes into the Valley's AAFA ranking. It will take a much broader and more concerted effort to realize dramatic improvements in air quality in the Valley and get us out of that first place position. While sometimes it's nice to be first, in this case, it's not a position we should try to maintain!

Until next month, breathe easy!