

Heartland 101: Monitoring Plan to better Understand Regional Air Quality

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Fort Air Partnership has announced plans to change the way air quality will be monitored within Alberta's Industrial Heartland and surrounding areas. FAP Executive Director Nadine Blaney said the changes will result in a better understanding of the impact of all emission sources on air quality, not just those that are regulated.

"Our move to a regional air monitoring network offers stakeholders more benefits and responds to community, government and industry needs," said Blaney. She explained that regional air monitoring takes into consideration regulated industrial emissions, and also non-regulated industrial sources, as well as household, transportation, agricultural and natural sources.

"It's important that the data we collect and provide is data people need now and in the future to make good air quality management decisions." The new plan aligns with Alberta and Canada's cumulative effects management programs.

In addition to regional air monitoring, the plan calls for more monitoring where people live and tracking the impact of emerging local issues like new oil and gas wells, and regional industrial and residential development. Over the next several years, FAP plans to add two continuous monitoring stations; relocate two others; increase sampling of Volatile Organic Compounds around oil and gas wells and other locations; eliminate monitoring that is redundant; and upgrade technologies.

A few changes have already been put in place, such as upgrading network data collection software, but full implementation of the plan will depend on getting funding support from the provincial government and other sources, noted Blaney. More details about the monitoring plan are available on-line at fortair.org.

A spinoff benefit of system upgrading is development of a live to website stream of raw data from FAP's continuous monitoring stations. This allows anyone to check out air quality readings at any time. People can search by station, or by substance, and get hour-by-hour current or historic raw data in an easy-to-understand format. FAP hopes to have the new service launched by early March.

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*Heartland 101 is a monthly print and on-air (Mix 107.9 FM) series brought to you by **Life in the Heartland**, a partnership of five local organizations improving access to information, resources, and contacts for communities in and around Alberta's Industrial Heartland.*