

Unpaved Roads, Dust & Air Quality



A Message from the Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency

Why the concern over dust?

The Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency (Spokane Clean Air) responds to many citizen complaints regarding dust. During the dry summer months, dust can especially be an air quality concern and a public nuisance.

If left uncontrolled, dust can be a public health hazard. When inhaled, fine dust particles travel deep into the lungs, increasing breathing problems, damaging lung tissue, and aggravating existing health problems. Those at highest risk to experience health impacts are those with respiratory conditions, the elderly and the young. Children are at risk because their lungs are still developing.

Where does all the dust come from?

In the Spokane area, most of the dust pollution comes from a combination of activities, including:

- Driving on paved roads before winter traction sand is cleaned up
- Driving on unpaved roads and parking lots
- Dirt and mud tracked onto clean roadways (from dirt roads, construction sites, dirt alleys, etc)
- Construction and demolition activities
- Dirt, gravel and other types of storage piles
- Handling and transfer of materials
- Agricultural/farming activities



Dust stirred up from motorist traveling on an unpaved road.

What can be done to reduce dust?

- Avoid travel on unpaved roads whenever feasible. Use an alternate route to reach your destination.
- If you have to drive on an unpaved road, keep your speed down. Driving slowly on an unpaved road will dramatically reduce the amount of dust emissions.
- Hire a private contractor, who is approved by the city or county, to apply a dust suppressant to your road (often referred to as road “oiling” although it isn’t oil that is applied.)
- Establish a local or road improvement district with your neighbors, to help fund part of the paving project. For more information, contact:
City : 625-6300 County: 477-3600
- Keep your vehicle in the driving lane and off the shoulder of the road where dirt and debris accumulate.
- Don’t use a leaf blower to clean dirt/debris from sidewalks, parking lots, or driveways. Blowing this into the air doesn’t solve the problem, it just moves it around. Use a broom and dustpan instead!
- When hauling debris, keep the load covered at all times.

For more information contact the Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency at 477-4727, or visit www.spokanecleanair.org.

