

# A History of Air Pollution

**N**atural events, such as volcanic eruptions, forest fires and dust storms caused the first air pollution problems. With the discovery of fire,



human-made air pollution was born.

Ancient peoples use fire for

heating and cooking. Core samples of Arctic and Antarctic ice show that particles in the air increased as cities grew and the population multiplied.

**L**ater, Marco Polo introduced coal to Europe, having learned of its uses as a fuel during trips to China. During the 13th century, the public protested over the release of pollutants from burning coal. England's King Edward I banned the burning of imported coal in 1273. This is the earliest record of an air pollution law. A blacksmith who violated the ban in 1307 was convicted and then hanged.



**A**s communities grew, so did air pollution. During the Industrial Revolution, people started using machines and factories to manufacture things in large quantities. Factories needed power, and this power came from the burning of fuels such as coal and oil.

In London during the early 1950s, "killer fogs" created by pollution from coal burning, led to more than 5,000 deaths. In 1956, Great Britain passed a Clean Air Act, requiring the use of cleaner fuels, better furnaces, and electric heat. Within a few years, particulate

levels in

London dropped 30%.

The United States Congress passed the first Clean Air Act in 1963.

**T**he last several decades have seen a tremendous increase in the use of automobiles. In Spokane County, 9,279,822 vehicle miles are driven daily. By the year 2025, vehicle miles travels is expected to grow to 14,726,784. That's equal to 32 trips to the moon and back! Today, motor vehicles are the leading cause of air pollution. Exhaust from motor vehicles contain many



toxic pollutants, including carbon monoxide. Automobiles are also a source of particulate matter and ground-level ozone.



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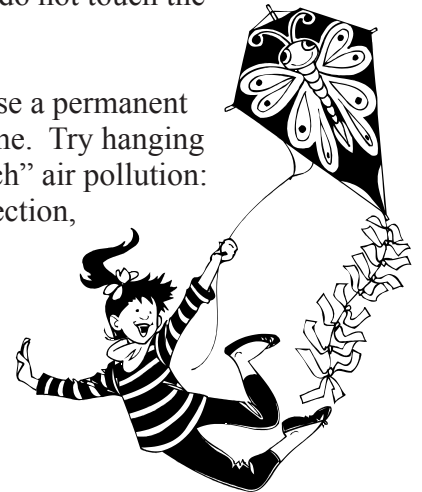
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# Can you collect air pollution?

## Make an Air Strip!!

### Directions:

1. Using a ruler to measure, cut a strip of posterboard or cardboard that is two inches wide and ten inches long.
2. Cut five holes, each about an inch in diameter, in the strip. Use the ruler to find a round object of the right diameter or use a compass to draw the circles. (NOTE: A quarter is about one inch in diameter.)
3. Use a hole punch to put a small hole in one end of the strip. Tie a string through the hole; the string will be used to hang the strip at a selected site.
4. Put long pieces of clear tape over one side of the strip. Be sure to completely cover all five holes. (Depending upon the width of the tape, you may need two or more pieces.) The sticky side of the tape will collect particulate matter from the air. Make sure you do not touch the sticky side of the tape.
5. Before hanging the air strip at a selected site, use a permanent marker to write the date, location, and your name. Try hanging the strip at a place where you are likely to “catch” air pollution: on the playground, at a bus stop, near an intersection, on your porch or in a tree.
6. Check the air strip after a week, then remove the strip after two weeks. Place the strip over a white piece of paper and look at the collected particles with a magnifying glass. What do you think caused the air pollution you collected?



As you've learned in this edition of *Kid's Page*, most man-made air pollution comes from the fossil fuels we burn— to run automobile engines, make electricity, and power factories.

Maybe there are some different sources of energy that don't create air pollution! Use your imagination to think of a **car that doesn't use fossil fuels**. Use this box to draw your car. What does your car use for fuel?

