

Message for U.S. Citizens

As documented by official Chinese monitors and confirmed by the Mission's air quality monitors, air pollution levels in Beijing and many parts of eastern China during the month of January have been extremely high. We know that winter months typically have higher AQI readings than other seasons and that Spring Festival Eve (February 9, 2013) may have extremely high pollution levels due to the fireworks.

While there are many causes for the elevated air pollution levels (including industrial and vehicular pollution and coal burning), the region has also experienced multiple inversion weather patterns over the past few weeks, reducing average air flow and essentially trapping the pollution in place which contribute to the problem. Air quality can differ greatly between cities or between urban and rural areas and U.S. citizens living in or traveling to China may wish to consult their doctor when living in or prior to traveling to areas with significant air pollution.

The Chinese Ministry of Environmental Protection provides its own air quality data for cities throughout China. You can view the information at <http://english.mep.gov.cn>.

The U.S. Embassy in Beijing provides air quality data and additional information about air quality on its website. The U.S. Consulates in Chengdu, Guangzhou, and Shanghai also make air quality data available. These data are updated frequently and may be viewed from the following links:

* U.S. Embassy Beijing provides information about air quality data and information about air quality: <http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/070109air.html>.

*U.S. Consulate in Chengdu air quality data: <http://chengdu.usembassy-china.org.cn/air-quality-monitor4.html>

*U.S. Consulate in Guangzhou air quality data: <http://guangzhou.usembassy-china.org.cn/guangzhou-air-quality-monitor.html>

*U.S. Consulate in Shanghai air quality data: <http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/airmonitor.html>

Additional information about air quality from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency may be found at:

- Air Pollution Dangers and Measures: http://oehha.ca.gov/air/risk_assess/wildfirev8.pdf (p.17-20)
- EPA's Air Quality Index: <http://www.airnow.gov/index.cfm?action=aqibasics.aqi>
- EPA's PM2.5 website: http://www.epa.gov/ttn/naaqs/pm/pm25_index.html

We strongly recommend that U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in China enroll in the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at <https://step.state.gov/step>. STEP enrollment gives you the latest security updates, and makes it easier for the U.S. Embassy or nearest U.S. consulate to contact you in an emergency. If you don't have Internet access, enroll directly with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

Regularly monitor the State Department's website at <http://travel.state.gov>, where you can find current Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and the Worldwide Caution. Read the Country Specific Information for China at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1089.html. For additional information, refer to "A Safe Trip Abroad" on the State Department's website.

Contact the U.S. embassy or consulate for up-to-date information on travel restrictions. You can also call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free from within the United States and Canada, or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Follow us on Twitter at <https://mobile.twitter.com/travelgov> and Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/travelgov>, and download our free Smart Traveler iPhone App at <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/smart-traveler/id442693988?mt=8> to have travel information at your fingertips.

The American Citizen Services Unit of the U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai is located at 1038 West Nanjing Road, 8th Floor, Shanghai 200041. For the American Citizen Services operation hours, please refer to our website: <http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/service.html>. If you are a U.S. citizen in need of urgent assistance, the emergency number for the U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai is (86) (21) 3217-4650).