

## Interesting Air Facts

- A person breathes about 16 kg of air every day. As a comparison, we consume 0.7 kg of food and 1.4 kg to 2.3 kg of water per day. Needless to say, the quality of the air around us does have a significant impact on our health.
- Air pollution from natural sources has been a feature of the earth for millions of years. Volcanic smoke and dust, sand and dust storms and wild fires are all sources of natural air pollution.
- The idea that polluted air can be harmful to man humans dates back to the Middle Ages. Direct evidence of bad effects from polluted air began to accumulate after the first use of coal around the beginning of the fourteenth century.
- One of the worst air pollution disasters occurred in London in December of 1952. Five days of stagnant and poor-quality air brought about by high pressure weather systems caused between 3,500 and 4,000 deaths.
- In our day-to-day lives each of us adds to air pollution. Nearly everything we do and every product we buy creates some pollution. We all bear some responsibility for reducing air pollution.
- In spite of the many improvements to the engines of vehicles, they are still the major contributor to air pollution in Alberta. Exhaust fumes contain CO<sub>2</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub> and particulate matter. A single engine gives off relatively small amounts of pollutants. However, there are so many vehicles that the small amounts add up to a significant pollution problem.
- The warming of the atmosphere by heat reflected back to Earth by gases in the upper atmosphere is called the greenhouse effect. Many scientists have linked the increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide with the rise in the earth's temperature over the last century.
- Large amounts of CO<sub>2</sub> have been released into the atmosphere by burning coal, oil, gas and wood. This adds to the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.
- A very small rise in the air temperature may have a very great change on Earth. A rise of 3°C in average annual temperature would make the grain growing areas of southern Alberta and Saskatchewan unsuitable for agriculture.
- Industries spend several billion dollars each year on pollution control and abatement.
- In an effort to control the concentration of air pollutants at ground level, some companies have built smoke stacks up to 300 metres high.
- Air pollution causes rubber tires on automobiles to crack and become porous.
- It is estimated that a fleet of 500 SST jets over a period of years could increase the water content of the stratosphere by 50 to 100%, which could result in a rise of average temperature on the surface of the Earth by 0.2°C and could cause destruction of the stratospheric ozone.