

- [News](#)
- [Nation](#)

# ‘Huge improvements’ in air quality noted as motor vehicle use lessened

By [Jonathan L. Mayuga](#)

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Air quality in Metro Manila continues to improve amid the ongoing implementation of the enhanced community quarantine in Luzon, which limited the movement of motor vehicles since March 17, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) noted.

Based on the DENR’s latest Air Quality Monitoring Data released, the air breathed in the National Capital Region (NCR) is much safer today than a month ago, or before the entire country was ordered placed under a State of Public Health Emergency due the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic.

This was attributed by the DENR-NCR air quality monitoring to the fact that public transportation was suspended immediately, while the movement of private vehicles was also drastically cut down.

Much of the air pollution in urban areas is carbon monoxide or half-burned smoke emitted by motor vehicles, which is being monitored by quality monitoring stations put up in strategic areas in the NCR.

The Marikina City Hall Air Quality Monitoring Station noted that air pollution in the city decreased in daily particulate matter, or PM-10 concentration from 13 percent to 72 percent, with an average of 43 percent from March 15 to April 10.

In Parañaque City, Don Bosco Barangay Hall Air Quality Monitoring Station reported the decrease in daily PM-10 concentration ranges from 4 percent to 54 percent or an average of 22.6 percent.

The significant drop in air pollution in Metro Manila was observed as early as a week after the quarantine was implemented.

The acceptable threshold standard level of PM-10 is 60 mass per unit volume (expressed as ug/Ncm).

Based on DENR Administrative Order 2013-13, the acceptable limit for PM-2.5 is 50 ug/Ncm for the short term 24-hour average level, and 35 µg/Ncm for the long term one-year average level.

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“We can see the drastic drop in numbers of PM-2.5 in Muntinlupa and Parañaque, and the drop in numbers of PM-10 in Las Piñas and Marikina. This explains why our sky now is clear and looks clean,” DENR Undersecretary Benjamin D. Antiporda said.

“The sudden stop of activities in many countries allows the Earth to heal from environmental degradation,” Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu said underscoring the upside of the lockdown. “The major cause of climate change, [which is] air pollution due mainly by mass transport energy emissions, is being abated.

The number 2.5 in PM-2.5 refers to the diameter in micrometers or micron of the fine mixture of minute solid particles and liquid droplets present in the atmosphere. When inhaled, these can affect the heart and lungs.

PM-2.5 particles come from emissions of motor vehicles, fossil fuel power plants, and wood burnings, among others. PM-10 is typically from emissions of crushing and grinding machines and dust from cemented and dirt roads.

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