

## **DENR ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER ON ESTABLISHING BREAKPOINTS FOR PM 2.5 AIR QUALITY INDEX REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY EMB**

In compliance with RA 8749 or the Philippine Clean Air Act of 1999, as well as Section 2 of DENR Administrative Order (DAO) 2000-81 or the Review of Air Quality Guideline Values, the Environmental Management Bureau-Department of Environment and Natural Resources (EMB-DENR), together with its created Technical Working Group (TWG) reviewed the Particulate Matter 2.5 (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) Air Quality Index (AQI) Breakpoints.

In order to protect public health, safety and general welfare, the Department Administrative Order formulating PM<sub>2.5</sub> AQI Breakpoints, is now approved as DENR Administrative Order No. 2020-14, or *Establishing the Breakpoints for Particulate Matter 2.5 (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) Air Quality Index (AQI) and Amending Section 5(a) of DAO 2013-13 "Establishing the Provisional National Ambient Air Quality Guideline Values for Particulate Matter 2.5 (PM<sub>2.5</sub>)"*.

Engr. William P. Cuñado, OIC-Director of the EMB said that the newly developed breakpoints are part of the Bureau's continuous implementation of its programs on Air Quality Management. "There is a need to improve the current Air Quality Index guidelines, especially in the time of the new normal. Air quality and its effects on the environment and health should be of utmost importance, especially during these times hence these new breakpoints," Cuñado said

The EMB, together with its TWG studied and developed the PM<sub>2.5</sub> AQI Breakpoints that will be accurately followed throughout the country. Members of the TWG include personnel from EMB Central Office Air Quality Management Section (AQMS) headed by Engr. Jundy Del Socorro, University of the Philippines Institute of Environmental Science & Meteorology (UPIESM) headed by Dr. Mylene Cayetano, Department of Health, World Health Organization, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA), Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and the Department of Transportation (DOTR) among others.

The Breakpoints, which are divided into six (6) levels of air quality for PM<sub>2.5</sub>, with their corresponding breakpoint values (lowest to highest) in micrograms per micro cubic meter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ), and cautionary statements for the general public, are classified as follows:

1. Good (Green) (0-25): No cautionary statement.
2. Fair (Yellow) (25.1-35.0): No cautionary statement.
3. Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups (Orange) (35.1-45.0): People with respiratory diseases such as asthma shall limit outdoor exertion.
4. Very Unhealthy (Red) (45.1-55): Pedestrians should avoid heavy traffic areas. People with heart or respiratory diseases such as asthma, should stay indoors and rest as much as possible. Unnecessary trips should be postponed. People should voluntary restrict the use of vehicles.
5. Acutely Unhealthy (Purple) (55.1-90): People should limit outdoor exertion. People with heart or respiratory diseases such as asthma, should stay indoors and rest as much as possible. Unnecessary trips should be postponed. Motor vehicle use may be restricted. Industrial activities may be curtailed.
6. Emergency (Maroon) (above 91): Everyone should remain indoors (keeping windows and doors closed unless heat stress is possible). Motor vehicle use should be prohibited except for emergency situations. Industrial activities, except that which is vital to public safety and health should be curtailed.

The developed breakpoints were also presented to the Inter-Agency Committee on Environmental Health (IACEH). A Public Forum on the Development of PM<sub>2.5</sub> Breakpoints for AQI Reporting was also held and conducted by the EMB's Air Quality Management Section (AQMS) recently.