

# Regional News Release

*Ten local public health departments.  
One united message.*



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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## Health improvements noted in national study

Area health departments applaud improvements but urge additional steps be taken to protect and improve health in response to a report released yesterday by the New England Journal of Medicine. The report discussed a study of fine-particulate air pollution and average life expectancy from 1980 to 2000 in 51 U.S. metropolitan areas, including the Kansas City metro. The study found that reductions in ambient air pollution in that 20 year period accounted for as much as 15 percent of the overall increase in life expectancy in the study areas, which locally translates to about a 4 month increase.

Previous studies had shown links between air pollution and mortality. On days with higher particulate air pollution, there is an increase in emergency room visits and hospitalization for respiratory and heart conditions. This latest study reinforces that knowledge.

“The report has validated the work of Public Health,” said Joe Connor, director of the Unified Government of Wyandotte County, Kansas City, Kan., Health Department. “By having responsible environmental regulations in place, the overall health of citizens has improved.”

Though the Kansas City metro showed significant improvements in clean air and life expectancy, in each of the measures charted in the report, the metro fell right in the middle of the pack. The study went on to show that the cities that cleaned up their air the most showed larger increases in life expectancy.

“Though we have made more progress than about half the other cities in the study, there are still significant areas where we can improve,” said Dr. Rex Archer, director of the City of Kansas City, Mo., Health Department. “Mass transit improvements, rooftop and rain gardens, improved sewers and drain run-offs are all projects being considered in different areas of the metro that can affect and improve the health of residents.”

For more information on how to improve your health and life expectancy, contact your local health department. For the original report, visit the New England Journal of Medicine Web site, [www.nejm.org](http://www.nejm.org).

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