PUBLIC OUTREACH KIT · PARTNER GUIDE

Same Air, Different Story

Ready-to-use materials to help your community understand why air quality apps disagree, and what to do about it.

Why this kit exists

When smoke, fireworks, or an ozone episode hits, residents check whatever app is on their phone. AIRI's 2026 study of the ten most-used AQI websites across seven U.S. cities found that **all ten showed the same main AQI category only about 7% of the time**, and any two sites disagreed about a third of the time. Sites differ in the monitors they use, the pollutants they include, the words and colors they show, and how fast they update.

This kit turns those findings into plain-language public messaging your agency can share as-is. It is free to use, available in English and Spanish, and designed to clear up common misconceptions about air quality readings and help communities know how to respond.

Disclaimer: AIRI does not endorse any particular air quality app or website, or vouch for the accuracy of any single tool.

What's in the kit

Item	Files	Best use
Flyer, co-branded	SameAir_Flyer_EN_CoBrand.pdf SameAir_Flyer_ES_CoBrand.pdf	Add your logo and local contact in the dashed box at bottom left, then print or post.
Flyer, ready to print	SameAir_Flyer_EN_ReadyToPrint.pdf SameAir_Flyer_ES_ReadyToPrint.pdf	No customization needed. Clinics, libraries, schools, rec centers, community events.
Flyer, large print (2 pages, double-sided)	SameAir_Flyer_EN_LargePrint_CoBrand.pdf SameAir_Flyer_ES_LargePrint_CoBrand.pdf ReadyToPrint versions of each	Same content in 12 pt or larger text. Clinics, senior centers, libraries, and anyone who prefers larger print. Logo slot is on the back page.
Social media series (7 posts, 1200×1200)	social/EN/ and social/ES/ (PNG images) SameAir_LogoPlacement_Guide.png Captions_AltText.txt	Instagram, Facebook, X, LinkedIn, Nextdoor. Ready-to-paste captions and alt text for every post, in English and Spanish. Post as-is or add your logo in the footer's open area (see "Adding your logo to the posts").
This guide	SameAir_PartnerGuide.pdf	Internal reference for communications staff.

Accessibility

The flyers in this kit were built to meet **WCAG 2.1 Level AA**, the accessibility standard the U.S. Department of Justice adopted under ADA Title II for state and local government web content, including PDFs posted online.

- **Color contrast:** all text meets the 4.5:1 minimum and icons meet 3:1. EPA's official AQI colors are used unchanged, with text colors chosen to meet contrast on each band.
- **Not relying on color alone:** every AQI color band also shows its number range and category name, so the information is clear to people with color blindness.
- **Screen readers:** the PDFs are tagged with headings, reading order, table headers, lists, alt text for the logo, and the document language (English or Spanish).
- **Large print:** the two-page version uses 12 pt or larger text for all content.

Keeping it accessible when you customize: if you add your logo or contact information, give the logo alt text and run Acrobat's *Check for accessibility* before posting online. AIRI can't certify files after they are modified, and compliance also depends on how and where materials are posted, so confirm with your agency's ADA or accessibility coordinator.

Adding your agency's logo

1. **Adobe Acrobat:** open the CoBrand PDF, choose *Edit PDF → Add Image*, and place your logo inside the dashed box. Add a line of text (phone, website, or alert sign-up) with *Add Text*. Your logo will cover the dashed outline.
2. **Canva or similar:** upload the PDF, place your logo and contact over the dashed box, and export as PDF.
3. **No design tools?** Use the ReadyToPrint version, or print the CoBrand version and apply a label or stamp in the box.

Please keep the AIRI credit line, and contact AIRI before editing any content. If you need wording changes for your jurisdiction, we're happy to help.

Social media series

Seven square graphics (1200×1200) in English and Spanish, designed to run as a week-long series, one post per day, or as single posts when they fit the moment.

#	Post	Key message
1	Same air, different story	Two apps can disagree about the same air; the 10 sites showed the same AQI category only 7% of the time
2	"Poor" air quality. But how poor?	The same word means different air on different apps; compare the number to EPA's scale
3	One number, one pollutant	The overall AQI shows the worst pollutant as a summary; check individual pollutants if you're sensitive
4	Check which pollutant you're seeing	Ozone and particles behave differently and call for different actions
5	Why do apps disagree?	Different monitors, unknown data sources, and different timing
6	Sensors can show a trend	Use sensors to spot changes; use official sources for the official AQI
7	4 smart habits	AirNow.gov, the EPA scale, play it safe, check again

Suggested posting plan

When	What to post
Kickoff week (any time; spring is ideal, before ozone season)	The full series, one post per day, 1 → 7. Pin post 2 (EPA scale) or post 7 (habits) to your profile.
Ozone Action Days / ozone advisories	Post 3 (one number, one pollutant) + post 4 (ozone vs. particles) alongside your official advisory.
Wildfire smoke or a large local fire	Post 6 (sensors vs. official monitors) + post 4; link to fire.airnow.gov.
Before July 4th / New Year's Eve	Post 6 + post 7 (habits), since fireworks smoke is very local and changes fast.
Back-to-school / youth sports season	Post 4 + post 2, aimed at coaches, school nurses, and parents of kids with asthma.

Suggested hashtags: **#AirQuality #AQI #OzoneSeason** · Spanish: **#CalidadDelAire #AQI #TemporadaDeOzono**. Add your local tags, such as your city or air district name.

Adding your logo to the posts

Every post has an open area at the bottom left of the footer, next to "In partnership with AIRI." You can post the images as-is, or add your agency's logo in that area. *SameAir_LogoPlacement_Guide.png* (in the social folder) shows where it goes. It's for reference only, so don't post it.

1. Open the post in Canva, PowerPoint, Google Slides, or another design tool.
2. Place your logo in the open area at the bottom left of the footer. It's in the same spot on every post. Any shape works; keep the logo within about 440 × 100 px on the 1200 × 1200 image, with a little space from the edges and from "In

partnership with AIRI."
3. Resize the logo by dragging a corner, so it keeps its proportions.
4. Save or download the post as a PNG at 1200 × 1200.

Choosing a logo file: the footers are navy, gold, maroon, or blue, depending on the post. If your logo stands out against the footer color, use a transparent PNG version. If it doesn't (for example, a dark logo on the navy footer), use a version on a white background; it will read as a small badge.

The captions and alt text stay the same whether or not you add a logo; there's no need to describe your logo in the alt text.

How to post: captions and alt text

Each post comes with two pieces of text, both in *Captions_AltText.txt* and in the tables at the end of this guide:

- **Caption:** the text that appears with the post. Paste it into the normal post text box.
- **Alt text:** a written description of the image that screen readers read aloud to people who are blind or have low vision. Because each post's message is inside the graphic, the alt text is the only way that content reaches those users. It also displays when an image fails to load. Alt text is part of WCAG 2.1 AA, and many government communications policies require it on every image.

Alt text goes in a separate field, not in the caption:

Platform	Where to add alt text
Facebook	After adding the photo, select **Edit** → **Alternative text**, choose custom alt text, and paste.
Instagram	On the final screen before sharing, select **Advanced settings** → **Write alt text**.
X	After uploading the image, select **+Alt** (or **Add description**) on the image.
LinkedIn	After adding the image, select **Alt text** in the image editor.

Platform menus change often; if you can't find the field, search the platform's help center for "alt text." Write hashtags with capitalized words (#AirQuality, not #airquality) so screen readers read them correctly.

Talking points for staff fielding calls

> **"My app says unhealthy, but the official site says moderate. Which is right?"**
> Both can be right. Neighborhood sensors can pick up local air quality events on a specific block very quickly. Official monitors are highly accurate but spaced farther apart, show the regional picture, and are what our public alerts are based on. If you or someone in your home is sensitive and the sources disagree, take the more protective option and limit time outdoors.

- **Which app should I use?** Start with AirNow.gov (or the AirNow app) for the overall AQI and daily forecasts, including ozone. For smoke, the AirNow Fire and Smoke Map (fire.airnow.gov) combines official monitors with corrected low-cost sensors.
- **Note:** the Fire and Smoke Map shows particle pollution only. On high-ozone days, residents should also check the overall AQI on AirNow.gov.
- **What about sensor apps like PurpleAir?** High-coverage sensor networks are good at showing local trends, but they can overestimate specific values, especially in heavy smoke or high humidity.
- **Why don't other apps explain their numbers?** Many apps calculate their AQI with proprietary methods and don't disclose which monitors they use, which makes their readings hard to interpret.
- **Why is my app's "Poor" different?** Some commercial apps use their own scales and labels. The six EPA colors and categories are the official standard; compare the number to the EPA chart.
- **Why did it change so fast?** Air quality can change hour to hour, and some sites average over longer periods than others. Check again later in the day.

About the research

Same Air, Different Story is independent AIRI research (2026). We captured each site's default air quality map every hour, at the same time at all ten sites, from May 21 through July 7, 2026, in Los Angeles, Washington DC, New York City, Miami, Seattle, Houston, and Chicago. Case studies included the Boyle Heights warehouse fire in Los Angeles (June 2026) and

July 4th fireworks in Washington, DC. Findings were presented at the IMW Ozone Exchange Conference (October 28, 2026); a peer-reviewed paper is in preparation. Public materials refer to commercial sites generically by design.

Questions, custom versions, or other languages?

Atmospheric Interdisciplinary Research Institute (AIRI) · inquiry@airiconsulting.com · www.airiconsulting.com

We'd love to hear where you used the kit. Send us a photo or a link to your post.

Spanish materials were written for general U.S. audiences; a quick review by a native-speaking staff member can adapt them to local usage.

Spanish flyers and captions link directly to the Spanish versions of EPA's tools: espanol.airnow.gov and fire.airnow.gov/?lang=es. When you share Spanish materials, use these links too.

Captions and alt text: English



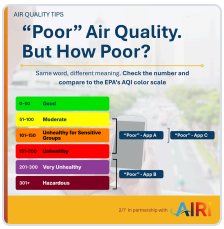
Post 1 · SameAir_EN_01_same_air.png

CAPTION

Checked two air quality apps and gotten two different answers? You're not imagining it. Researchers at AIRI checked 10 popular air quality websites every hour in 7 U.S. cities this summer. They showed the same AQI category for the same air only 7% of the time. This week, we'll explain why that happens and how to find the reading that matters for you and your family. Want to know more about the study? Visit airiconsulting.com. #AirQuality #AQI

ALT TEXT

Photo of a wildfire burning on a hillside at night. Two phone screens showing the same place at the same time: App A shows green, AQI 42, Good; App B shows red, AQI 168, Unhealthy. Text: Same Air. Different Story. Same place and same time. Only 7% of the time did 10 popular air quality websites show the same AQI category for the same air. AIRI study, 7 U.S. cities, summer 2026. Learn more about this study at airiconsulting.com.



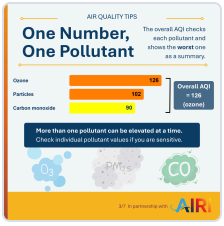
Post 2 · SameAir_EN_02_poor_how_poor.png

CAPTION

"Poor" on one app can mean something very different on another. In a recent AIRI study, the same word pointed to anything from Moderate to Hazardous air, depending on the site. One app's "Moderate" even matched what EPA calls Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups. The fix: look at the number and compare it to EPA's six-color scale. Save this post for reference. #AirQuality #AQI

ALT TEXT

Faded photo of a city street behind an EPA Air Quality Index scale with six color bands: 0 to 50 Good, green; 51 to 100 Moderate, yellow; 101 to 150 Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups, orange; 151 to 200 Unhealthy, red; 201 to 300 Very Unhealthy, purple; 301 and up Hazardous, maroon. Brackets show three apps that all use the word Poor: App A's Poor spans Moderate through Unhealthy, App C's Poor matches Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups, and App B's Poor spans Very Unhealthy and Hazardous. Text: Poor air quality. But how poor? Same word, different meaning. Check the number and compare to the EPA's AQI color scale.



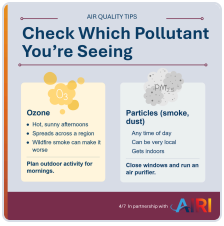
Post 3 · SameAir_EN_03_one_pollutant.png

CAPTION

The AQI number represents just one pollutant at a time, such as ozone or particles (smoke and dust). When several are measured, the overall AQI checks each one and shows the worst as a summary. On some days, like smoke on a hot, sunny afternoon, the air may include high levels of more than one pollutant. If you're sensitive, check individual pollutant values. #AirQuality #AQI

ALT TEXT

Title: One number, one pollutant. Text: The overall AQI checks each pollutant and shows the worst one as a summary. Bar chart example from EPA guidance: ozone AQI 126, particles AQI 102, carbon monoxide AQI 90, with a bracket pointing to Overall AQI equals 126, from ozone. Callout: More than one pollutant can be elevated at a time. Check individual pollutant values if you are sensitive. Illustrations of ozone, particle, and carbon monoxide clouds.



Post 4 · SameAir_EN_04_ozone_particles.png

CAPTION

Which pollutant is behind the number changes how to protect yourself. Ozone builds on hot, sunny afternoons across a whole region, and wildfire smoke can make it worse, so plan outdoor activity for mornings. Particles from smoke and dust can spike any time and be very local, and they get indoors too, so close windows and run an air purifier if you have one. #OzoneSeason #AirQuality

ALT TEXT

Title: Check which pollutant you're seeing. Two panels with cloud illustrations. Ozone: hot, sunny afternoons; spreads across a region; wildfire smoke can make it worse. Plan outdoor activity for mornings. Particles, smoke and dust: any time of day; can be very local; gets indoors. Close windows and run an air purifier.



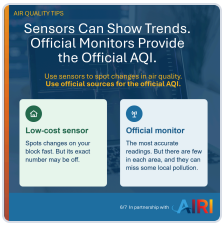
Post 5 · SameAir_EN_05_why_disagree.png

CAPTION

Why don’t air quality apps agree? 1) Different monitors: official monitors and low-cost sensors measure air quality differently. 2) Unknown data sources: some commercial apps mix monitor types or use their own methods without saying how. 3) Different timing: some update every few minutes, others average over hours. #AirQuality #AQI

ALT TEXT

Title: Why do AQI apps disagree? Three reasons, each with an icon. Different monitors: official monitors and low-cost sensors measure air quality differently. Unknown data sources: some apps don't say what their number is based on. Different timing: some update every few minutes; others average over hours. Illustration of a phone showing an AQI gauge.



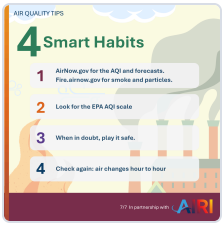
Post 6 · SameAir_EN_06_sensors_trend.png

CAPTION

A low-cost sensor near you can show the air on your block getting worse, often before official maps do, but its exact number may be off. Sensors can read too high in heavy smoke or humidity, so EPA corrects their data, and the AirNow Fire and Smoke Map shows these corrected readings alongside official monitors. Official monitors are the most accurate, but there are few in each area and they can miss some local pollution, like from a fire, a busy road, or an industrial site. Use sensors to spot changes. Use official sources for the official AQI. #AirQuality #AQI

ALT TEXT

Background photo of a laptop showing data charts. Title: Sensors can show trends. Official monitors provide the official AQI. Text: Use sensors to spot changes in air quality. Use official sources for the official AQI. Two panels. Low-cost sensor: spots changes on your block fast, but its exact number may be off. Official monitor: the most accurate readings, but there are few in each area, and they can miss some local pollution.



Post 7 · SameAir_EN_07_smart_habits.png

CAPTION

4 smart habits for checking air quality: 1) Start with official sources: AirNow.gov for the AQI and forecasts, including ozone, and the Fire and Smoke Map (fire.airnow.gov) for smoke and particles. 2) Look for the EPA AQI scale and compare numbers to it. 3) When in doubt, play it safe: if sources disagree or several pollutants are high, and you or your child is sensitive, follow the more protective reading. 4) Check again, because air changes hour to hour. #AirQuality #AQI

ALT TEXT

Illustrated background of clouds, dust, and smokestacks. Title: 4 smart habits. 1, AirNow.gov for the AQI and forecasts; fire.airnow.gov for smoke and particles. 2, Look for the EPA AQI scale. 3, When in doubt, play it safe. 4, Check again: air changes hour to hour.

Captions and alt text: Spanish



Post 1 · SameAir_ES_01_same_air.png

CAPTION

¿Revisó dos aplicaciones de calidad del aire y obtuvo dos respuestas distintas? No es su imaginación. Investigadores de AIRI revisaron cada hora 10 sitios web populares de calidad del aire en 7 ciudades de EE. UU. este verano. Mostraron la misma categoría del AQI para el mismo aire solo un 7% de las veces. Esta semana le explicamos por qué pasa y cómo encontrar la lectura que importa para usted y su familia. ¿Quiere saber más sobre el estudio? Visite airiconsulting.com. #CalidadDelAire #AQI

ALT TEXT

Foto de un incendio forestal en una ladera de noche. Dos pantallas de teléfono con el mismo lugar a la misma hora: la Aplicación A muestra verde, AQI 42, Bueno; la Aplicación B muestra rojo, AQI 168, Insalubre. Texto: El mismo aire. Distinta historia. Mismo lugar y misma hora. Solo el 7% de las veces 10 sitios web populares de calidad del aire mostraron la misma categoría para el mismo aire. Estudio de AIRI, 7 ciudades de EE. UU., verano de 2026. Obtenga más información sobre este estudio en airiconsulting.com.



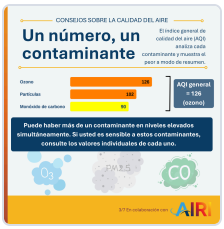
Post 2 · SameAir_ES_02_poor_how_poor.png

CAPTION

"Mala" en una aplicación puede significar algo muy distinto en otra. En un estudio reciente de AIRI, la misma palabra correspondía a cualquier nivel, desde Moderado hasta Peligroso, según el sitio. El "Moderado" de una aplicación incluso equivalía a lo que la EPA llama Insalubre para grupos sensibles. La solución: fíjese en el número y compárelo con la escala de seis colores de la EPA. Guarde esta publicación. #CalidadDelAire #AQI

ALT TEXT

Foto difuminada de una calle de la ciudad detrás de la escala del Índice de Calidad del Aire (AQI) de la EPA con seis bandas de color: 0 a 50 Bueno, verde; 51 a 100 Moderado, amarillo; 101 a 150 Insalubre para grupos sensibles, naranja; 151 a 200 Insalubre, rojo; 201 a 300 Muy insalubre, morado; 301 o más Peligroso, granate. Corchetes muestran tres aplicaciones que usan la palabra Mala: la de la Aplicación A abarca de Moderado a Insalubre, la de la Aplicación C equivale a Insalubre para grupos sensibles y la de la Aplicación B abarca Muy insalubre y Peligroso. Texto: Calidad del aire mala. ¿Pero qué tan mala? Misma palabra, diferente significado. Compruebe el número y compárelo con la escala de colores del AQI de la EPA.



Post 3 · SameAir_ES_03_one_pollutant.png

CAPTION

El número del AQI representa solo un contaminante a la vez, como el ozono o las partículas (humo y polvo). Cuando se miden varios, el AQI general revisa cada uno y muestra el peor como resumen. Algunos días, como cuando hay humo en una tarde calurosa y soleada, el aire puede tener niveles altos de más de un contaminante. Si usted es sensible, revise los valores de cada contaminante. #CalidadDelAire #AQI

ALT TEXT

Título: Un número, un contaminante. Texto: El índice general de calidad del aire (AQI) analiza cada contaminante y muestra el peor a modo de resumen. Gráfico de barras de ejemplo de la guía de la EPA: AQI de ozono 126, de partículas 102, de monóxido de carbono 90, con un corchete que indica AQI general igual a 126, por el ozono. Recuadro: Puede haber más de un contaminante en niveles elevados simultáneamente. Si usted es sensible a estos contaminantes, consulte los valores individuales de cada uno. Ilustraciones de nubes de ozono, partículas y monóxido de carbono.



Post 4 · SameAir_ES_04_ozone_particles.png

CAPTION

Saber qué contaminante está detrás del número cambia cómo protegerse. El ozono se forma en las tardes calurosas y soleadas en toda una región, y el humo de incendios puede empeorarlo: planee las actividades al aire libre para la mañana. Las partículas de humo y polvo pueden subir a cualquier hora y ser muy locales, y también entran a las casas: cierre las ventanas y use un purificador de aire si tiene uno. #TemporadaDeOzono #CalidadDelAire

ALT TEXT

Título: Compruebe qué contaminante está viendo. Dos paneles con ilustraciones de nubes. Ozono: tardes de calor y sol; se extiende por la región; el humo de incendios forestales puede empeorarlo. Haga actividades al aire libre por la mañana. Partículas, humo y polvo: a cualquier hora del día; puede ser muy local; entra a espacios interiores. Cierre las ventanas y use un purificador de aire.



Post 5 · SameAir_ES_05_why_disagree.png

CAPTION

¿Por qué no coinciden las aplicaciones de calidad del aire? 1) Distintos monitores: los monitores oficiales y los sensores de bajo costo miden la calidad del aire de forma distinta. 2) Fuentes de datos desconocidas: algunas aplicaciones comerciales combinan tipos de monitores o usan sus propios métodos sin explicar cómo. 3) Distintos tiempos: algunas se actualizan cada pocos minutos; otras promedian varias horas. #CalidadDelAire #AQI

ALT TEXT

Título: ¿Por qué las aplicaciones del Índice de Calidad del Aire (AQI) no coinciden? Tres razones, cada una con un ícono. Monitores distintos: los monitores oficiales y los sensores de bajo costo miden la calidad del aire de forma diferente. Fuentes de datos desconocidas: algunas apps no dicen en qué se basa su número. Tiempos distintos: algunas se actualizan cada pocos minutos; otras sacan un promedio de varias horas. Ilustración de un teléfono con un medidor del AQI.



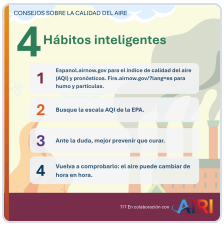
Post 6 · SameAir_ES_06_sensors_trend.png

CAPTION

Un sensor de bajo costo cerca de usted puede mostrar que el aire en su cuadra está empeorando, a menudo antes que los mapas oficiales, pero su número exacto puede no ser preciso. Los sensores pueden marcar demasiado alto con mucho humo o humedad, por eso la EPA corrige sus datos, y el Mapa de Incendios y Humo de AirNow muestra estas lecturas corregidas junto a los monitores oficiales. Los monitores oficiales son los más precisos, pero hay pocos en cada zona y pueden no detectar parte de la contaminación local, como la de un incendio, una calle con mucho tráfico o una zona industrial. Use los sensores para notar cambios. Use fuentes oficiales para el AQI oficial. #CalidadDelAire #AQI

ALT TEXT

Foto de fondo de una computadora portátil con gráficos de datos. Título: Los sensores pueden mostrar tendencias. Los monitores oficiales proporcionan el Índice de Calidad del Aire (AQI) oficial. Texto: Utilice sensores para detectar cambios en la calidad del aire. Consulte fuentes oficiales para obtener el índice de calidad del aire (AQI). Dos paneles. Sensor de bajo costo: detecta rápido los cambios en su cuadra, pero el número exacto puede no ser preciso. Monitor oficial: las mediciones más precisas, pero hay pocos en cada zona y pueden no detectar parte de la contaminación local.



Post 7 · SameAir_ES_07_smart_habits.png

CAPTION

4 hábitos inteligentes para revisar la calidad del aire: 1) Empiece con fuentes oficiales: espanol.airnow.gov para el AQI y los pronósticos, incluido el ozono, y el Mapa de Incendios y Humo (fire.airnow.gov/?lang=es) para el humo y las partículas. 2) Busque la escala AQI de la EPA y compare los números con ella. 3) Ante la duda, mejor prevenir que curar: si las fuentes no coinciden o hay varios contaminantes altos, y usted o su hijo es sensible, siga la lectura más protectora. 4) Vuelva a comprobarlo: el aire puede cambiar de hora en hora. #CalidadDelAire #AQI

ALT TEXT

Fondo ilustrado con nubes, polvo y chimeneas. Título: 4 hábitos inteligentes. 1, espanol.airnow.gov para el índice de calidad del aire (AQI) y pronósticos; fire.airnow.gov/?lang=es para humo y partículas. 2, Busque la escala AQI de la EPA. 3, Ante la duda, mejor prevenir que curar. 4, Vuelva a comprobarlo: el aire puede cambiar de hora en hora.

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