



Leaf Blowers & Air Quality

A MESSAGE FROM THE SPOKANE REGIONAL CLEAN AIR AGENCY

BACKGROUND

Leaf blowers harm the air we breathe. Leaf blowers are convenient time savers for professional gardeners, landscapers, maintenance crews, and homeowners. However, using leaf blowers to clean dirt and debris from paved surfaces (sidewalks, driveways, parking areas) creates clouds of dust (fine particles) that are harmful when inhaled. Additionally, gas powered leaf blowers, and other 2-stroke engines emit ozone-forming vapors that are also harmful to breathe.

Leaf Blowers Harm The Air We Breathe

They generate as much tailpipe emissions from their engines (two-stroke) in one hour as a newer automobile does in driving over 350 miles. While a car will emit that pollution over a long stretch of road, a leaf blower may concentrate it all in one neighborhood;

- They emit clouds of oily smoke (2-stroke engines);
- They kick up more than just leaves. Swirling clouds of debris, including soil or dust, and possibly fragments of pollen or mold spores, pollute our air; and
- They move dirt and other debris from private property onto public rights of way, creating problems for maintenance crews.

Fine Dust & Smoke Particles Are Harmful

Smoke and dust particles created when using leaf blowers are not simply a nuisance, they are harmful to our health. Fine particles suspended in the air, are inhaled and deposited in the airways or reach deep into the lungs where they may accumulate, or be absorbed into the underlying tissues.

People with respiratory or heart disease, diabetics, older adults, and children are at a greater risk when breathing polluted air.

Taking Reasonable Precautions

Improper use of a leaf blower may lead to a violation of dust regulations. Responsible parties can be held accountable if reasonable precautions are not taken to prevent excessive amounts of dust or particulates from becoming airborne and transporting onto other's property. Reasonable precautions are actions taken that minimize dust emissions. Effective options vary depending upon the situation, however, here are some examples:

- limiting the power or air speed to keep dirt from blowing
- refraining from using commercial sized blowers that are employed for blowing off large areas
- cease the activity or operation
- water or other wetting agents
- dust suppressants

Leave the Leaf Blower

Clean up dirt and debris effectively and cleanly by not using a leaf blower. Instead, choose a better alternative:

- manual rakes and brooms
- vacuum-type equipment with dust collection device attachments

For more information, contact Spokane Clean Air, (509) 477-4727 or www.SpokaneCleanAir.org.