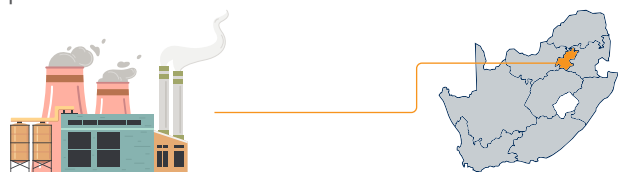


# Air Pollution and Your Health:

## What communities in South Africa need to know

### Where is air pollution happening in SA?

Air pollution affects many parts of South Africa, but especially the Highveld Vaal Triangle and Waterberg-Bojanala Priority Areas. These areas have many fossil fuel industries, power plants and mining activities, that impact fenceline communities vulnerable to health risks.



### Why air pollution matters for your health

Air pollution is a major health risk and can cause:

- Breathing problems
- Lung infections
- Tuberculosis (TB)
- Pneumonia
- Heart disease
- Small particles in the air can cause premature death. These particles can't be seen with the naked eye.

A relatively small increase in air pollution can raise the risk of death to nearly 20%<sup>1</sup>.

### Who is most at risk?

Some groups are more vulnerable to air pollution:

- Children are especially vulnerable because their lungs are still developing
- Older adults and people with existing illnesses
- Pregnant women
- People living near industries or busy roads

### When is air pollution worst?

Air pollution is usually highest in winter because:

- Cold weather traps pollution
- More households use coal, wood, or paraffin
- Industrial emissions remain high

This means health risks increase during winter months.

### What causes air pollution?

Main sources of air pollution include:

- Industrial emissions especially from fossil fuels
- Coal, Oil and Gas power stations
- Mining activities especially open cast coal mining
- Household fuel burning (paraffin, coal, gas)
- Traffic and transport from petrol

Industrial emissions are a major driver of pollution hotspots in the Priority Areas.

### What can be done?

Government actions

- Adequate regulation of big polluters like Eskom and Sasol to comply with minimum emissions standards (MES).
- Better, integrated air quality monitoring
- Cleaner energy solutions, renewable (e.g. Rooftop Solar energy)
- Early warning systems for prevention
- Health system preparedness that caters to context specific health risks

Community actions

- Reduce burning of coal, wood, and waste
- Avoid outdoor activities during high pollution days
- Protect children and elderly during winter
- Seek medical care early for breathing problems
- Support clean air initiatives
- Demand adequate services from local and provincial government

### Why Action Is Urgent

Air pollution in South Africa's Priority Areas is a serious health risk that is also preventable. Working together across communities, government, and industry can reduce deaths, improve health, protect vulnerable groups and create cleaner environments. Everyone has a constitutional right to have their environment protected.

**CLEAN AIR SAVES LIVES.  
PROTECTS YOUR LIVELIHOODS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES.  
IT ALSO REDUCES THE COSTS AND BURDEN ON HEALTH CARE SERVICES.**

<sup>1</sup>Research shows that even small increases in pollution can increase deaths. For example: A 10 µg/m<sup>3</sup> increase in PM2.5 (small particles in the air) can increase death risk by 14–19%.