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Despite favourable atmospheric conditions: too much atmospheric particulate matter in 2007

Only little improvement on account of mild winter and rainy summer

The Federal Environment Agency's preliminary evaluation of 415 measuring stations demonstrates that favourable atmospheric conditions in 2007 were a relevant factor that account for lower levels of particulate pollution than in previous years. Yet there is absolutely no reason to sound the all-clear, for 2007 also had incidences of particulate matter concentrations above the established cap. 34 of the total 415 measuring stations (compared to 98 in 2006) exceeded PM₁₀ particulate matter levels of 50 microgrammes/cubic metre of air ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) more often than the allowable 35 days. Furthermore, the annual PM₁₀ limit of 40 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ was not complied with in measurements made at the Stuttgart Neckartor site. As UBA Vice President Dr. Thomas Holzmann sees it, there is no reason to breathe easily, commenting that "the mild winter and rainy summer of 2007 were conditions in which particulate matter did not have an adverse impact on health as much as it had in previous years. However, this might change again soon, so we must make further reductions in the long term".

Air pollution with nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) remained high in 2007: more than half the measuring stations near roads registered annual mean values of NO₂ above the 40 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ cap which must be complied with as of 2010. Should NO₂ emissions show no significant changes by 1 January 2010, levels of NO₂ significantly higher than the limit value can be expected at these sites. NO₂ is an indicator for the waste gas mixture emitted by industrial plants, power and district heating stations, building heating systems, and traffic. Nitrogen dioxide is harmful to the respiratory tract.

The interim evaluation of the 2007 air pollution situation compared to earlier years can be viewed at <http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/luft/schadstoffe/luftbelastung>. Current air quality data on the Internet at: <http://www.env-it.de/umweltbundesamt/luftdaten/index.html>

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