

E-mail from Alan Muller\* to NAB, February 22, 2008:

Re: **MPCA Air Quality Index**

Maybe I can take this opportunity to point out something about how the "Air Quality Index" is calculated. From the PCA's website:

Air quality in the Twin Cities metro area is determined by measuring four pollutants: ozone, sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) and carbon monoxide. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) takes hourly measurements of these pollutants at air quality monitoring sites located throughout the Twin Cities. Ozone levels, which are only elevated in warm weather, are measured from April through September in Minnesota.

The AQI translates each pollutant measurement to a common index, with an index of 100 set to reflect where health effects might be expected in sensitive populations. An AQI value of 100 generally corresponds to the national ambient air quality standard for the pollutant, which is the level EPA has set to protect public health. **The pollutant with the highest index value is used to determine the overall AQI.**

The key point is in red. Only the highest pollutant is considered. One could have a situation where 2, 3, or 4 pollutants were elevated and having a cumulative or synergistic health impact, but the AQI would not reflect that. In this respect, the AQI could and should be improved.

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