

# Improving Kids' Environment

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## **IKE Statement on IDEM Decision to Cancel Local Air Pollution Contracts**

Improving Kids' Environment today raised questions and serious concerns about a decision by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management to cancel contracts with six local air agencies that provide air quality protection and public education services in Indiana. The cities affected are Indianapolis, Evansville, Terre Haute, Anderson, Gary, and Hammond.

For decades, these local agencies have worked under state contracts using federal pass-through money to provide air pollution control services. Their duties include responding to citizen complaints about air quality issues such as open burning, odors and fugitive dust; conducting inspections and providing technical assistance to local businesses; monitoring air quality in their communities; and educating the public about health issues related to air quality and what they can do to improve air quality locally.

“This is very unfortunate for Indiana residents,” said Janet McCabe, Executive Director of Improving Kids' Environment and a member of the Indianapolis Air Pollution Board. “The state and local agencies have worked cooperatively together for many years to improve air quality. These agencies play a very important role in improving air quality and public health in their communities and can provide more prompt service to citizens and business than IDEM staff. There has been no public discussion about how those services will be provided once the state assumes the responsibilities and little to no notification of this decision to affected stakeholders and elected officials in these areas. With limited state resources and the loss of local expertise, we are certain that the attention to local air quality issues will decrease.”

According to the National Association of Clean Air Agencies, more than 165 local governments across the country provide air pollution control services under agreements with state agencies. The federal Clean Air Act decades ago recognized the important role of local agencies to ensure direct and immediate government response to air quality issues.

IKE is concerned that functions currently provided by local air agencies will be performed less effectively or not at all:

- Operating local air quality monitors: Will monitors for ozone, nitrogen oxide, sulfur dioxide, lead, carbon monoxide and fine particles be discontinued?
- Responding to citizen complaints: Local agencies generally provide same-day responses to citizen complaints. We are concerned that the response time will be much longer—state inspectors can take up to 30 days to respond to complaints--and that certain complaints will be deemed “too local” for state inspectors to address.

- Inspecting local sources of air pollution and compliance assistance: There will be less frequent inspection of local air pollution sources. IDEM's schedule calls for inspecting the largest sources once every one or two years, smaller sources once every five years, and the smallest sources (which are often in or near residential areas) not at all. Local agencies generally inspect annually, and provide compliance assistance services such as reminding local companies of upcoming reporting deadlines.
- Public education: Programs like Indianapolis' Knozone program have significantly raised awareness among the public about health risks of poor air quality. For example, through the Central Indiana Clean Air Partnership, 96 businesses have pledged to voluntarily reduce their air emissions. IDEM will simply not be able to devote the resources in local communities to run these kinds of programs.
- Local air quality planning: The local government perspective is essential in air quality planning, and local government is usually better able to engage local businesses in clean air efforts. This role is important to economic development, since being "out of attainment" with national clean air standards means it is harder for new and expanding businesses to obtain air pollution permits.

The state contracts with local agencies are paid for by pass-through money from Indiana's federal Clean Air Act grant. Local funding provides additional resources to the local agencies. No state revenues are used.

"This decision, with no planning for replacing these services, is a bad one for children's health in Indiana," said McCabe. According to ISDH's latest study, the lifetime asthma prevalence rate for Indiana children is 13.7 percent, higher than the national average of 12.7 percent. Asthma is the leading cause of missed school days. Outdoor air quality is a known trigger for asthma, and can bring on or exacerbate an asthma attack. "We urge Governor Daniels to take a step back and engage local government, the business community, and the public in constructive discussions about how to provide these important public services in the most efficient way."

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