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Beijing raises 'red alert' threshold for air pollution warning

From March, China's capital will bring in new sliding scale for air quality, after issuing its first ever 'red alert' for the city in December

Reuters

Monday 22 February 2016 01:50 GMT

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Smog covers Beijing and Shanghai in December, as China's government issues its first ever 'red alert' for the capital.

Beijing is to raise the thresholds for issuing its highest air pollution warnings, the state news agency Xinhua reported on Sunday, two months after acrid smog triggered the city's first ever "red alert".

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In future, the highest alert will be issued only when the daily average air quality index (AQI) is forecast to exceed 500 for a day, 300 for two days in a row or 200 for four days, Xinhua reported, citing Beijing's environmental protection bureau.

At present, a red alert is issued when the AQI is forecast to exceed 200, a level the US deems "very unhealthy", for at least three days.

Schools were closed and outdoor construction work was suspended when thick smog prompted Beijing to issued its first red alert in December 2015.

The new criteria take effect at the end of March and are designed to standardise pollution alerts across Beijing, the neighbouring port city of Tianjin and four cities in the surrounding Hebei province, Xinhua reported.

Liu Wei, deputy head of the emergency response office at the environmental protection bureau, said the move would in effect tighten the pollution controls for the outlying regions, according to Xinhua.

Pollution is a sensitive topic in China, with thousands of protests sparked every year by concerns about environmental degradation.

Environmental officials admit China is unlikely to meet the air quality standards set by the state until at least 2030.

Beijing, one of China's most polluted cities, announced in January it would close 2,500 small highly polluting firms in 2016. It also plans to develop a network of ventilation "corridors" to help disperse smog, Xinhua reported on Sunday.

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hankuang7h ago

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The original report in Xinhua was about standardising criteria for issuing pollution alerts.

Before this change Beijing would issue a red alert when AQI exceeds 200 for more than three days. And Tianjin and Hebei would issue a red alert when AQI exceeds 500 for at least one day.

Now a red alert when the daily average AQI

is forecast to rise above 500 for a day or longer, or

to climb above 200 for four straight days or longer, or

when the daily average exceeds 300 for two days or longer

Many may see insidious intent in this change as they often do in anything the PRC does.

However this is fairly certain: Beijing AQI in 2016 would be better than that of 2015.

Reply

Report

philipwhiuk8h ago

0

For reference, the Oxford Street limit is 200 18 times a year base on an hourly limit. The monitoring period is important, because Oxford Street experiences spikes (probably coinciding with bus movement) and the daily average probably very rarely breaks 200.

If the daily average in part of China is 200, you can bet the spikes are several times that.

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