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**DEC UNVEILS NEW COMMUNITY AIR SCREEN PROGRAM TO
EXPLORE LOCAL AIR QUALITY ISSUES
Enables Community Groups to Collect Air Samples**

The New York State Department of Environment Conservation today launched a Community Air Screen Program designed to partner with community groups to conduct air quality surveillance, DEC Commissioner Joe Martens announced. Applications to participate in the program will be accepted until May 24.

The program will enable local community groups and residents to take air samples in neighborhoods across the state to help identify and address local air quality concerns. DEC will analyze the samplings for possible air pollutants.

“The Community Air Screen Program will help us understand air quality concerns at the community level,” said DEC Commissioner Martens. “This program focuses on local-scale sampling and empowers environmentally-conscious residents to get involved in improving the air quality in their communities.”

Participants will use Environmental Protection Agency-approved sampling equipment that will collect air samples for an hour. This type of sampling provides a snapshot of the types of air toxics found in a community. A total of 60 samples will be collected through this program which is set to run for about a year.

The locations for air sampling will be determined using information provided by community groups, local meteorological information and location of industrial sources or high traffic areas.

The Community Air Screen Program will focus on gaseous pollutants including benzene, which is found in gasoline; perchloroethylene, which is used by some dry cleaning facilities and methylene chloride, which is used as a solvent and paint stripper. If air toxics are detected at levels of concern, DEC will conduct additional testing. If further sampling confirms air quality concerns, DEC staff will determine possible sources contributing to the pollution levels of concern and look at ways to reduce them. Additionally, a recommendation will be made for further evaluation through EPA’s Community-Based Air Toxics Program.

The EPA provided one-time funding of \$170,000 to conduct the Community Air Screen Program.

Community groups and residents interested in participating in this program can obtain more information or an application online at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/public/81629.html> or call the DEC office at 518-402-8044.

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