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How clean is the air in Germany?

Particulate matter concentrations also high in 2009- nitrogen dioxide pollution exceeds cap set as of 2010

The Federal Environment Agency (UBA) has assessed air quality for the year 2009 based on interim data, and arrived at the following conclusion: at 55 percent of air measuring stations placed in urban areas in the vicinity of traffic, annual mean levels of nitrogen dioxide concentrations (NO₂) in 2009 were above the 40 micrograms/cubic metre air (µg/m³) which is set as the cap as of 1.1.2010.

“Nitrogen dioxide pollution in 2009 was at similar levels to the previous two years. It is unfortunately probable that the new limit value will also be exceeded at many sites in 2010”, said UBA President Jochen Flasbarth.

Exceedences of threshold values occur primarily in cities and conurbations, that is, where the majority of the population resides. The main sources of nitrogen oxides are traffic emissions as well as industrial and household combustion processes.

Particulate concentrations (PM₁₀) in 2009 also rose above the statutory caps in place since 2005- despite measures taken at the federal, *Laender* and municipal levels. There were PM₁₀ concentrations of 50 µg/m³ measured at 23 of the total 408 measuring stations in the network on more than 35 days. Moreover, the annual mean based on a PM₁₀ limit value of 40 µg/m³ was not observed at the measuring station in Stuttgart Neckartor. In general, particulate pollution was somewhat higher in 2009 compared to 2008, which was the year with the lowest levels of such pollution since 2000.

“The inner-city clean air measures taken, such as the establishment of environmental zones and raising the bar on requirements for fireplaces and small firing installations, were both appropriate and more than timely”, said Flasbarth.

The interim assessment of air quality for 2009, including a comparison to previous years, is on the Internet at: http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-medien/mysql_medien.php?anfrage=Kennummer&Suchwort=3895; current data on air quality is here: <http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/luft/immissionssituation/index.htm>

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