



Science In Our Lives

Clean Air Progress—Example To The World

(NAPSA)—“Every American expects and deserves clean air,” said former President H. W. Bush in announcing new clean air legislation in 1989. The United States, he said, should set an example for the rest of the world to follow.

And we have. According to former EPA administrator Michael Leavitt, “Today’s air is the cleanest most Americans have ever breathed.” It is cleaner than the air in many other industrialized countries and much of the developing world.

The greatest progress has taken place since 1970, when Congress passed a landmark Clean Air Act and the Environmental Protection Agency was formed to administer it.

At that time, the EPA identified six air pollutants as the most serious and set standards for reducing them. Today, four of the six, including lead and carbon monoxide, have been almost totally eliminated from the air we breathe and the other two—ozone and soot—have been greatly reduced. Houston and Los Angeles are among the 20 most-improved cities.

Thirty years ago, automobiles were a major source of air pollution. Today’s cars are 99 percent cleaner because of dramatic reductions of smog-forming emissions.

Our air is much cleaner despite the fact that in these same 30 years, the U.S. economy has grown 175 percent, there are more than 100 million more cars on the road and our population has grown by more than 100 million.

“This is an amazing feat,” according to a study of air pollution data by the Foundation for Clean Air Progress, which found that America’s air today is “dramati-



cally cleaner and healthier” than 30 years ago—even 10 years ago.

Credit for this progress goes to Congress for passing the laws, to the EPA and state regulators for enforcing them, and last but not least to the engineers and scientists in the automotive, chemistry, utility and other industries for developing cleaner fuels and the anti-pollution processes and devices such as catalytic converters for cars and “scrubbers” that remove sulfur dioxide from utility smokestacks.

And the progress continues. Since 1991, the EPA’s voluntary Green Chemistry Program has promoted development of many new chemical technologies for preventing pollution at its source in ways that are most cost-effective and scientifically sound. Meanwhile, under the chemical industry’s Responsible Care program, air emissions from chemical plants have been reduced by over 70 percent in the last 15 years despite greatly increased production.

To learn more about how chemistry is essential to clean air and health, visit the American Chemistry Council at www.americanchemistry.com.