

Directorate: Atmospheric Quality Information
Briefing on the SAAQIS launch

Section 32 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, states that all South Africans have the right of access to any information held by the state, and any information that is held by another person and that is required for the exercise or protection of any rights. In order to uphold this right and effectively address air quality information requirements contained in the National Environment Management Air Quality Act (AQA of 2004.), the national Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA), in partnership with the South African Weather Service (SAWS), established the first generation South African Air Quality Information System (SAAQIS) in 2010. Today, we are launching the enhanced second generation SAAQIS – which is user friendly and is a complete solution to all air quality information requirements.

It is a web-based interactive system that makes air quality information available to stakeholders and provides uniformity in the way data; information and reporting are managed across the country. The SAAQIS streamlines the flow of air quality information; provides a tools to assist in managing air quality and builds awareness about air quality among stakeholders. In addition to the website, the second generation SAAQIS also provides a smart phone application tool - which can be downloaded right now on Android platforms and will shortly be available in the iOS platform.

SAAQIS has two main objectives. The first is to meet the legal purpose of reporting air quality related information to the public and the second, as an information system to assist all spheres of government in strengthening policy-making related to air quality issues. In the past, policy-making in this area has been based largely on ad-hoc air quality information often with no historical data to

understand air quality trends and impacts. With the existence of an air quality information system such as the SAAQIS, policy-making is being driven by air quality information.

At the core of the second generation SAAQIS is the reporting of ambient monitoring data in **REAL TIME**. This means that, where there is ambient monitoring conducted, the public is now able to access SAAQIS to get the status of ambient air, and make informed decisions on their daily activities. This information is also packed as an Air Quality Index, a simplified way of presenting complex air quality measurements to the public in a scale from 1 to 10. The LIVE data will assist the public to take necessary precautions in areas that may have high air pollution concentrations especially for those individuals who suffer from respiratory illnesses and other sensitive groups of people. It will also enable government to respond timeously

to air pollution incidences as they can see spikes on the data in real time.

All provinces and local municipalities that have air quality monitoring stations are working on bringing their air quality data to the SAAQIS to ensure national data coverage. To date, over 40 stations air quality monitoring stations are reporting to the SAAQIS. Most of these stations belong to networks such as the three national priority areas of Vaal Triangle, Highveld and Waterberg, and municipalities such as Tshwane, Port Elizabeth and City of Cape Town. Plans are already in place to reach out to other networks with the intention of expanding the number of stations reporting to the SAAQIS.

Ladies and gentlemen, South Africa at large, it is my great pleasure to present to you a second generation SAAQIS!!!!

Kindly sit and watch the demonstration of the SAAQIS and you can also visit the DEA Exhibition at the front door at your leisure.