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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Air Quality Alert Issued for Central Ohio

Particle Pollution Levels Through Thursday Expected to be Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups

(Columbus - February 11, 2014) The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) is issuing an Air Quality Alert for Tuesday, February 11 through Thursday, February 13. The region – Delaware, Fairfield, Franklin, Knox, Madison and Licking counties – will experience particle pollution levels that are Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups on the national Air Quality Index (AQI) scale.

This Air Quality Alert is being issued as a result of recent weather conditions combined with high regional pollutant carryover from Monday. Cold overnight temperatures resulted in a strong temperature inversion over Central Ohio this morning, trapping pollutants near the surface. In addition, surface high pressure over the Great Lakes region produced calm to light northerly winds in Central Ohio, limiting the dispersion of pollutants. Light winds limiting pollutant dispersion will continue in the region through Thursday, with AQI levels expected to remain Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups.

Today's AQI is expected to reach 105. Wednesday's AQI is forecasted to reach 102 and Thursday's AQI is forecasted to reach 107.

MORPC uses the national AQI scale and issues Air Quality Alerts, notifying the public about daily ozone and particle pollution levels in Central Ohio so they can take action to minimize exposure and reduce their emissions. The AQI scale runs from 0 to 300—the higher the AQI value, the greater the health concern. When levels reach above 100, air quality is considered to be Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups.

Sensitive groups include people with asthma and heart disease who are more likely to suffer an increase in the number and severity of symptoms during an Air Quality Alert. To decrease the potential for health implications, sensitive groups of people are urged to limit prolonged outdoor exertion. People who are experiencing breathing difficulties should consult with their doctor. More information on the health effects of particle pollutions are available at: www.publichealth.columbus.gov and <http://www.myfcph.org/air.php>.

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Working to Build a Better Region

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Particle pollution is a mixture of solids and liquid droplets that vary in size. The smaller the particles, the more hazardous they can be to your health because they are more easily inhaled. Sources of particle pollution include motor vehicle exhaust, construction activity, power plants, industrial facilities and wood-burning fires.

During an Air Quality Alert, MORPC recommends taking the following actions:

- Reduce driving and consider using COTA, or carpooling or vanpooling to work by contacting RideSolutions at (888) 742-RIDE. Cars and trucks are major contributors to air pollution in the region.
- Turn off your engine instead of idling your vehicle to cut down on vehicle emissions that contribute to ozone and particle pollution. Businesses and individuals with diesel fleet vehicles are strongly encouraged to reduce idling during an Air Quality Alert due to particle pollution. You will save gas by turning the engine off and restarting it again if you expect to idle for more than 30 seconds. You will also prevent pollution by avoiding long idles.
- In extreme cold weather, scrape your windshield, start the car, drive it gently keeping the RPMs low for a few minutes and the engine will be ready to operate at normal speeds.
- Avoid topping off your tank at the gas station. Spilled gasoline pollutes the air when it evaporates.

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MORPC is a voluntary association of local governments in Central Ohio serving the region through planning, direct service, public policy information and innovative programming and intergovernmental coordinating services in the areas of transportation, land use, energy conservation, the environment and housing.