

Valemount Air Quality Management Plan

Introduction

Outdoor air quality is important for community health, quality of life, the environment, and the economy. While air quality in Canada is generally considered good and shows long-term improvement, some communities, including the Village of Valemount, exceed established air quality standards. Valemount faces persistent seasonal air quality challenges. Fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) is the air contaminant of primary concern. **See Appendix A for details.**

This plan, the Valemount air quality management plan (AQMP), provides a roadmap to support local air quality improvement over the next five years (2022-2026). Strategies include community engagement and awareness, community programming, monitoring and reporting, and municipal regulation and operations. Actions listed under each strategy focus on four key emission sources of PM_{2.5}: residential wood burning, open burning, dust, and vehicle idling.

While the AQMP was developed by the Valemount Clean Air Task Force (CATF), a Committee of Council, the implementation of the plan requires collaboration, coordination and the support of several stakeholders including the Village of Valemount, provincial government agencies, community partners, scientific experts, and residents.

The AQMP was developed based on current information but is intended to be a living document. Actions that align with the Vision and Goals of the AQMP will support air quality improvement in Valemount. As such, AQMP actions may be updated or re-prioritized from time-to-time to reflect new information, funding and partnership opportunities, or policy direction.

Vision and Goals

Vision: Achieve and maintain measurable air quality improvements aimed at protecting and enhancing public health, welfare, and the environment

Goal 1: The community of Valemount is well-informed, engaged, and empowered to improve and protect local air quality.

Goal 2: Air quality management in Valemount is fostered through strong, collaborative partnerships that support air quality improvement and prevent further deterioration.

Goal 3: Reduce PM_{2.5} emissions from local sources over time such that measurable improvements to air quality are observed in the community.

Strategies and Actions

Strategies and actions included in the AQMP provide a foundation for air quality improvement in Valemount over the next five years (2022-2026) and were developed based on current information. New actions and opportunities that are consistent with the Vision and Goals of the AQMP may be brought forward to the CATF for consideration.

Strategy: Community Awareness and Engagement

- Action: Develop an air quality webpage.
Priority topic areas
 - Current air quality conditions
 - Air quality and health
 - Programs and Rebates: Woodstove Exchange Program, Home Energy Efficiency Rebates (that reduce home heating needs)
 - Best practices: Residential Wood Burning, Outdoor Burning, Vehicle Idling, Dust Control
 - Studies and Reports: Dust study, AQMP progress reports

- Action: Acquire or develop modern air quality public engagement and outreach materials.

- Action: Develop and implement a seasonal residential wood burning communication social media campaign.
 - Spring: residential wood collection, curing and storage
 - Summer: residential wood burning appliance maintenance and cleaning
 - Fall: best wood burning practices; the dangers of burning garbage

- Action: Host community event(s) such as,
 - Burn-it-Smart Workshop or Master Burner Program
 - Wood burning appliance inspection/chimney sweep services
 - Public forum: presentations, FAQ session
 - Best wood burning practices pledge

Strategy: Community Programming and Building Partnerships

- Action: Continue to offer a community Woodstove Exchange Program.
 - Track the number of woodstove exchanges and resulting PM_{2.5} emission reduction estimates

- Explore opportunities to develop programs in collaboration community partners, such as
 - Seasoned firewood program
 - Firewood seasoning shelter program
 - Seasonal yard waste collection and/or wood chipping program
 - Chimney fires/sweep service

- Action: Review existing air quality improvement programs and initiatives in the region to share knowledge and identify opportunities for collaboration.

Strategy: Communicate and Report

- Action: Release an annual AQMP status report that includes
 - an update on AQMP actions.
 - an air quality (PM_{2.5}) snapshot based on the regulatory monitor operated at the firehall by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy.
 - a snapshot of air quality improvement programs, such as the woodstove exchange (e.g., number of exchanges and resulting PM_{2.5} emission reduction estimates).

- Action: Implement a community monitoring project using citizen-science sensors to
 - gain a better understanding of PM_{2.5} concentrations across the community
 - evaluate the representativeness of the regulatory monitor at the firehall
 - inform the woodstove exchange program

Strategy: Municipal Regulation and Operations

- Action: Develop a wood burning appliance registry.
- Action: Review Open Air Burning Bylaw No. 703 to ensure alignment with the provincial Open Burning Smoke Control Regulation (updated in 2019).
- Action: Track Village of Valemout outdoor burning permits electronically
- Action: Review winter road traction material specifications to minimize spring road dust events
- Action: Consider air quality benefits when prioritizing paving project under the Transportation Master Plan (as per Official Community Plan item 6.3)
- Action: Idle free signage: Add a larger, highly visible anti-idling sign near the town entrance (Highway 5 and 5th Avenue). Consider other key locations for smaller idle free signs.