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Lifeline

City breathes easier for Thanksgiving Day

THERE'S A LOT to be thankful for on this Thanksgiving Day, say Chicago environmentalists.

For one thing, the air is cleaner.

"Have you looked at the computer maps Poston [H. Wallace Poston, Chicago's commissioner of environmental control] just put out?" asked John Kirkwood.

Kirkwood is executive director of the Chicago Lung Association, the Christmas Seal people who hate dirty air.

The maps show that 51 per cent of Chicago's 228 square miles meets the federal clean air standard of 75 micrograms of dust per meter of air as of May, 1975.

In 1971, only 10 per cent of the city met that clean air standard. Back then, 41 per cent of the city was covered with dense soot that measured 100 micrograms per cubic meter. Today, only 5 per cent of the city's air is that contaminated.

Kirkwood is elated.

"That's something to be thankful for. In terms of complex environmental and governmental problems, air pollution is one of the few areas where we can show measurable progress in the last couple of years."

HERE ARE FURTHER Thanksgiving comments from Chicago environmentalists:

● Poston: "We have reduced dust levels. We meet federal standards for sulfur dioxide gas in the air. We are becoming more knowledgeable about ozone. We haven't had any serious episodes of air pollution this year, as they have in other parts of the country."

● Jacob Dumelle, chairman of the Illinois Pollution Control Board, suggests that cleaner air in Chicago might have something to do with the drop in deaths in the city since 1968—roughly 40,000 a year in 1968 to about 30,000 in 1975.



Casey Bukro
Environment Editor

"Whatever the reason, we ought to be thankful for that," said Dumelle, who pointed out that environmental control always has been a public health issue.

● Lee Botts, executive secretary of the Lake Michigan Federation: "I'm thankful that the PCB [polychlorinated biphenyls, an industrial poison making Great Lakes fish unfit for human consumption] is finally being faced up to. I'm thankful that more and more people are pushing government to rethink our commitment to nuclear power. The American public has not turned away from its concern for protecting the environment and is demanding that we protect the environment while providing jobs."

● Ted Berland, chairman of Citizens Against Noise: "In terms of noise, we can be thankful we have good laws on the books, such as the antinoise ordinance in Chicago. But I think we could be more thankful if these laws were more stringently enforced. I'm thankful I still have my hearing."

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