

AN INTRODUCTION TO VISUAL AIR QUALITY

Have you ever seen a haze in the sky or felt like there's a curtain between you and the mountains? Your view could be hazy for several reasons including fog, clouds, or even air pollution. "Visual air quality" is the term we use to describe the effect of air pollution on the view.

Visual air quality depends on the amount of pollution in the air. The white or brown haze that sometimes obscures our view of local mountains is caused when sunlight interacts with tiny particles or gases in the atmosphere. Although we can measure the amount of pollutants in the air, it is much more difficult to determine how they affect visual air quality. Air quality agencies in British Columbia's Lower Fraser Valley are working together to better understand visual air quality and they are formulating a strategy to protect our scenic vistas by reducing air pollution.



Air pollution occasionally degrades the view of distant landmarks in the Lower Fraser Valley.

The images below show how air pollutants can affect this beautiful view of the Vancouver skyline, the north shore and surrounding mountains. They show a range of visual air quality conditions during summer and fall of 2012.



Excellent



Fair



Very Poor

Images from a camera in Burnaby (Metrotown) which faces toward downtown Vancouver.