

High concentration of air-pollutants has been gripping several cities in Macedonia in last few days, primarily Skopje, the capital, and Strumica, near the border-crossing with Bulgaria. Due to exceptional air pollution, a number of emergency measures have been activated in an attempt to cope with the consequences.

According to local media reports today, the air in Skopje is still very polluted - at Lisiče measuring station, the fine particles quantity was 313 mg/m<sup>3</sup> of air, which is six times above safety levels.

The government of Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia has activated emergency air pollution measures that automatically come into force if the air pollution for two consecutive days is four times higher than the permitted 50 micrograms of PM10 particles per cubic meter; more precisely, if the air pollution exceeds 200 mg/m<sup>3</sup>.

The government has ordered ministries in charge with health and environment to excuse from work pregnant women, people over 60 years of age, and people with chronic health problems, including heart attack and stroke survivors, regardless their age. Working hours for people who work outdoors has also changed (from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.) and all sport and outdoor activities have been temporarily banned.

Public transport has been temporarily free for all in the capital, in an attempt to favor public buses and trains over private vehicles and help reduce pollution from exhaust gases. The government has also decided to ban heavy vehicles entering the city center and ordered to all public institutions, companies, factories and local authorities to limit their use of official vehicles to less than 50 percent of regular times.

Skopje - one of the most polluted European cities

This is the second time this winter that Skopje has a problem with a high level of air pollution. In mid-December, clouds of polluted air and fog practically paralyzed the city and perturbed air traffic.

Last year, the situation was critical for about two weeks. According to local media, fine particles were above 500 micrograms per cubic meter (500 mg/m<sup>3</sup>) of air. That is ten times higher than World Health Organization's recommended values.

Skopje is one of the most polluted cities in Europe and during the winter period the situation is often critical. The concentration of PM10 particles in the air reached up to 20 times the level of maximum in the past. According to a study by the World Health Organization, published at the beginning of last year, Skopje is among the 10 most polluted cities in Europe.

The hourly concentrations of PM10 particles in Skopje were reaching 20 times above maximum levels in given days. A study led by the Finnish Institute of Meteorology found

## Macedonia has activated emergency measures against air-pollution

that household heating is the highest contributor to air pollution, responsible for 32 percent of pollutant emissions, with traffic coming second with 20 percent contribution.

Source: balkangreenenergynews