

# Researchers track Amarillo pollution

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Measuring pollution in Amarillo all depends on the location.

So researchers tracking particles that contaminate the sky moved their two measuring devices to where it made the most sense for them: their own backyard near Medical Center Park.

"It is a great place to measure air quality to represent the entire city," said Dr. Brent Auvermann, associate professor of agricultural engineering at the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station in Amarillo. "This location represents the city and what kind of air people are breathing."

The station operates the air-monitoring devices for the Texas Commission on Environmental Qual-

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**MEASURING POLLUTION:** Brent Auvermann, associate professor of agricultural science at the Texas Agricultural Station in Amarillo, points to an air inlet on an air-monitoring device that can measure pollution in Amarillo. Researchers moved the devices Tuesday so the machines can better track pollution in the city.

## Air: Dust particles more of a problem than feedlot odor

FROM PAGE 1C

ity, and technicians can measure fine-particulate matter  $2\frac{1}{2}$ -microns in size. For a size comparison, the normal human hair is about 70 microns, Auvermann said.

Although the pollution devices' previous location downtown atop Amarillo's Public Library gave a good representation of air quality in Amarillo, researchers decided to move the machines Tuesday to the experimental station at 6500 W. Amarillo Blvd. because it is much easier to fix something that is so close, Auvermann said.

"They are in our back yard, so it's not a problem to troubleshoot," Auvermann said. "We have to make sure the numbers are right."

Brad Jones, regional direc-

tor of TCEQ, said another factor affecting the decision to move the machines was because of construction at the Globe-News Center for the Performing Arts.

"Construction work at the (center) might bias the sample, and it might not be a good representation," Jones said.

The devices track pollution in the air when fine-particulate matter enters the inlet of an air monitor.

Contaminants in the air are then separated into smaller parts until a sample is collected on a filter. The filter is later sent to a lab that has a contract with the Environmental Protection Agency for analysis, Auvermann said.

While one machine tracks the average amount of pollution during the entire day,

the other measures pollution levels every minute and shows concentration levels throughout the day, Auvermann said.

The federal government uses such devices to track pollution across the country because fine-particulate matter can seriously affect people's health because it can penetrate the lungs, Auvermann said.

Large bits of matter that swirl in the air usually are caught in the nose and don't pose a significant danger to human health, Auvermann said.

Although some cities have poor air quality, Jones said Amarillo's is relatively good, except for one problem.

"The only real thing we ever see is particulates from dust storms from 30- to 40-mph winds," Jones said. "We really don't have as much of

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the chemical pollutants."

While the famous Amarillo odor that comes from feedlots can be classified as a pollutant, it doesn't really jeopardize health, Jones said.

"Dust is much more of an issue," Jones said. "Particulates can create problems for people with breathing problems."



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