

China inspectors find widespread pollution control violations

The environmental authority has uncovered 140 problems during an air pollution inspection of 18 cities in north China's Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei (BTH) region and nearby areas.

Inspectors were despatched on an unannounced check of 363 government agencies and businesses, the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) said Monday in an online statement.

Many local authorities need to elaborate on and improve their pollution response plans, the MEP said.

In Huairou District, Beijing, enterprises were found to be operating despite being ordered to halt or reduce production when air quality worsens. Only two companies in Suning County, Cangzhou City, north China's Hebei Province, are subject to the restrictive measure.

The cities of Tianjin, Hengshui, Taiyuan and Dezhou were also criticized for "inadequate efforts."

The MEP also named and shamed enterprises that violated official policies.

Fengshi Metallurgy Material Co., in Dengfeng City, central China's Henan Province, falsified emission data to meet requirements. Zhuyou New Wall Material Co. in Suning blocked the door of its boiler room, hoping to fool inspectors.

China has started to intensify the fight against air pollution as cities suffered from more smoggy days in January, with northern areas the worst affected.

The share of days with good air quality in BTH was a mere 36.2 percent last month, a year-on-year drop of 19.6 percentage points.

Press release: One month to go until new vehicle tax rates come into force

DVLA is reminding motorists that there is just one month to go until new vehicle tax rates come into force for all cars and some motor homes that are first registered from 1 April 2017.

Rohan Gye, DVLA Vehicle Service Manager, said:

These changes won't affect any vehicles that are registered before 1 April 2017. So, for anyone who already owns a car or is thinking of buying a used car the rates of vehicle tax will not be changing. However, anyone considering buying a new car that will be first registered from 1 April should check the [vehicle tax rates table](#) on GOV.UK to find out how much they'll pay.

Under the changes, vehicle tax for the first year will continue to be based on CO2 emissions. After the first year, the amount of tax to pay will depend on the type of vehicle. The new rates are:

- £140 a year for petrol or diesel vehicles
- £130 a year for alternative fuel vehicles (hybrids, bioethanol and LPG)
- £0 a year for vehicles with zero CO2 emissions

In addition, for vehicles with a list price of more than £40,000, the rate of tax is based on CO2 emissions for the first year. After the first year, the rate depends on the type of vehicle (petrol, diesel, zero emission etc) and an additional rate of £310 a year for the next 5 years. After those 5 years, the vehicle will then be taxed at one of the standard rates (£140, £130 or £0) depending on the vehicle.

There is also [further information](#) available on the changes.

[Researchers from SRUC host world leading animal welfare expert Temple Grandin](#)

A world renowned animal behaviour professor has told an SRUC seminar that to increase animal welfare we must move away from words and take a more sensory based approach.

[Elmwood Horticulture students bring](#)

music and light to museum garden

Horticultural Students from the Elmwood Campus of SRUC are creating a sensory garden within the grounds of a famous St Andrews museum.

Former China Resources chairman stands trial

Song Lin, former chairman of state-owned China Resources Group, stood trial on charges of embezzlement and bribery on Monday in South China's Guangzhou City.

The trial was handled by Guangzhou Municipal Intermediate People's Court. The procuratorate accused Song of embezzling over 9.74 million yuan (1.42 million U.S. dollars) from 2004 to 2013.

The accused is also alleged to have accepted 23.36 million yuan from 2005 to 2012 in return for helping other companies or individuals to secure project cooperation, promotion and other issues.

Song pled guilty to all charges.

Over 80 lawmakers, journalists and citizens attended the open trial.

The verdict will be announced at a later date.