Fog and fireworks drive pollution spike

LEVEL B1


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I. WARM-UP

1. When do you notice dirty air in your city?
2. What kinds of weather make travel easier or harder?
3. How do people in your area celebrate with fire or light?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

particle
a very small piece of solid or liquid material in the air

fog
a thick cloud of tiny water drops near the ground that reduces visibility

bonfire
a large outdoor fire for a celebration or to burn waste

fireworks
small explosive devices that produce light and colour in the sky

guideline
an official level or rule to help people know what is safe

alert
an official warning to pay attention to a risk

disperse
to spread and move away so that it is less concentrated

burner
a device, such as a wood stove, used to burn fuel for heat

III. READING

Air pollution reached very high levels in several cities in England as still air and fog trapped emissions after a weekend of fireworks and bonfire parties. Government monitors said 11 sites, mainly in London and Greater Manchester, hit the top band for particle pollution, and 27 more recorded high levels.

The worst reading was in Hillingdon, west London. Fine particles (PM2.5) averaged 129 micrograms per cubic metre over 24 hours, more than eight times the World Health Organization's daily guideline.

Jane Burston of the Clean Air Fund said the spike likely came from autumn celebrations, and the calm weather meant pollution could not disperse. She warned that people with asthma should avoid outdoor exposure.

Larissa Lockwood of Global Action Plan urged public health messages and alerts asking people not to use wood burners when levels are high. A spokesperson for the mayor of London announced a high air pollution alert for Tuesday 10 November.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **The Guardian***: "Air pollution soars as fog traps emissions...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What weather condition helped keep pollution in place?
2. How many sites reached the highest band on the index?
3. Where was the worst reading and what was its PM2.5 level?
4. What reason did Jane Burston give for the pollution spike?
5. What action did Larissa Lockwood suggest on high-pollution days?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Should cities limit fireworks during foggy periods? Why or why not?
2. What simple steps can residents take to reduce winter air pollution?
3. How useful are phone alerts about local air quality in your view?
4. Who should act first on dirty air: government, companies or citizens?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Question tags

A question tag is a short question added to a statement to check or confirm. Match the auxiliary/modal and subject; positive statement → negative tag, negative statement → positive tag.

"It's very smoggy this morning, ***isn't it?****"*

"People shouldn't burn wood when levels are high, ***should they?****"*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Circle the correct option in each sentence.

1. Pollution hit the top band, (didn't it? / did it?) _____
2. There were high readings, (wasn't there? / weren't there?) _____
3. Fog traps pollution, (doesn't it? / isn't it?) _____
4. Levels have risen, (hasn't it? / haven't they?) _____
5. A high alert was announced, (wasn't it? / wasn't there?) _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading and comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 10 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach or check: particle, guideline, alert, disperse, bonfire, burner. Elicit PM2.5 as fine particle pollution, not technical detail.
- Run the reading in two passes: gist (what happened, where, key number), then detail (names, dates, actions). Sensitive point: health effects such as asthma—open discussion in pairs first and say students may speak about the news, not personal health.
- For discussion, set pairs to collect two reasons/examples, then form small groups to compare ideas and agree one action that would work in their city.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Take a quick class poll first, then pair students with different views to swap reasons.
2. Board a list of practical ideas (masks, routes, burners off) and ask for one pro and one con.
3. If answers are short, ask when they last received an alert and what they did next.
4. Split the room into three roles; have each group propose one concrete first step.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Debate: In teams, prepare and deliver a 2-minute case for or against limits on fireworks during fog.

Writing: Write a 70–90 word public health alert for London about high PM2.5 and safe actions.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Question tags

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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These answers are for teachers only. Please do not share this page with students.


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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What weather condition helped keep pollution in place?
   Still air and fog.
2. How many sites reached the highest band on the index?
   Eleven sites.
3. Where was the worst reading and what was its PM2.5 level?
   Hillingdon in west London, at 129 micrograms per cubic metre.
4. What reason did Jane Burston give for the pollution spike?
   Autumn celebrations like fireworks and bonfires, plus calm weather.
5. What action did Larissa Lockwood suggest on high-pollution days?
   Issuing alerts and asking people not to use wood burners.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: A question tag is a short question added to a statement to check or confirm. Match the auxiliary/modal and subject; positive statement → negative tag, negative statement → positive tag. (Examples constructed.)

> *"It's very smoggy this morning,* ***isn't it?****"*
>
> *"People shouldn't burn wood when levels are high,* ***should they?****"*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Circle the correct option in each sentence.

1. Pollution hit the top band, (didn't it? / did it?) **didn't it?**
2. There were high readings, (wasn't there? / weren't there?) **weren't there?**
3. Fog traps pollution, (doesn't it? / isn't it?) **doesn't it?**
4. Levels have risen, (hasn't it? / haven't they?) **haven't they?**
5. A high alert was announced, (wasn't it? / wasn't there?) **wasn't it?**