

Will Smog Be a Problem At the Olympic Games?



The Summer Olympic Games are due to get underway in Beijing, China, on August 8. But there are problems in the air -- the air that athletes will breathe, that is.

Chinese leaders have spent lots of money in recent years -- more than \$17 billion -- to clean up the air in and around Beijing, China's capital city. In spite of that effort, a gray cloud of smog hangs over the city on many days.

Last August, scientists tested the air in Beijing to learn what it might be like when the Olympic athletes come to town this August. "The air conditions are not ideal... but I see no reason to cancel events," one scientist said.

Bad air conditions in China could affect athletes who participate in outdoor events that last an hour or longer, Olympic officials said. Those events include the marathon, racewalking, road cycling, and mountain biking.

Chinese officials say they have a plan that will reduce the amount of pollution during the Games. Some factories in and around Beijing will be closed during that time. New rules will cut the amount of auto traffic during that time too.

NEWS WORD BOX

participate ideal
reduce marathon
monitor postpone

Olympic officials say that air quality could affect athletes' abilities. Athletes might not perform as well as they would in better conditions. Fewer records might be set.

MORE FACTS ABOUT THE SUMMER OLYMPICS IN BEIJING

- During the Games, air quality will be monitored daily and hourly. If necessary, officials may postpone some events.
- A marathon runner who was favored to win the gold medal has announced that he will not run the race. The dirty air poses a threat to his health, he said.

THINK ABOUT THE NEWS

If you were a member of the Olympic team in Beijing, how might you prepare to deal with its air and weather conditions?