

New AQI Light Coming to Blackhawk Center: A Beacon for Air Quality

This summer, residents of Winnebago will notice an unusual addition to the skyline: a 10-foot tower topped with a 3-foot diameter sphere at the Blackhawk Center. This eye-catching structure will house an innovative Air Quality Index (AQI) Light, designed to keep the community informed about local air quality.

Inside the sphere, a set of LED floodlights will illuminate the area with vibrant colors, creating a glowing effect that serves a crucial purpose. Similar to the Weather Ball in Sioux City, which changed colors to indicate upcoming weather conditions, the AQI Light will indicate current air quality levels rather than weather forecasts.

The AQI Light will shine in various colors, each representing a different air quality status:

Green	Good	Air quality is satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk.
Yellow	Moderate	Air quality is acceptable. However, there may be a risk for some people, particularly those who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
Orange	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is less likely to be affected.
Red	Unhealthy	Some members of the general public may experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
Purple	Very Unhealthy	Health alert: The risk of health effects is increased for everyone.
Maroon	Hazardous	Health warning of emergency conditions: everyone is more likely to be affected.

When air quality reaches an Orange level or higher, warning emails will be sent to local authorities to ensure they are aware of the conditions.

In addition to the visual alerts, a mobile app is being developed that will allow residents to check the current AQI level from the convenience of their smartphones, empowering individuals and families to make informed decisions about outdoor activities.

The AQI Light is expected to be completed by October 2025, marking a significant step toward promoting public health and environmental awareness in Winnebago. Stay tuned for updates as this exciting project progresses!

By Kurt Lyons - EPD Air Quality