8.3 Urban air pollution

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 14 marks**

KEY WORDS primary pollutant • secondary pollutant • photochemical smog • temperature inversion • particulate matter • low-emission zone

Objective

Build the skills to answer exam questions on **urban air pollution** : primary and secondary pollutants, **photochemical smog** , **temperature inversions** , health impacts and management.

You must be able to:

- distinguish primary and secondary pollutants, with sources
- explain how photochemical smog forms and how a temperature inversion traps it
- interpret air-quality data
- evaluate strategies to reduce urban air pollution

1 Key knowledge and worked examples

■ Urban air pollution

type	examples	main sources
primary (released directly)	nitrogen oxides (NO_x), sulfur dioxide (SO_2), carbon monoxide (CO), particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$, PM_{10}), volatile organic compounds (VOCs)	vehicle exhausts, power stations, industry, burning coal and wood
secondary (formed in the air)	**tropospheric ozone** (O_3), PAN	NO_x + VOCs react in **sunlight**

Photochemical smog: in sunny, still weather, NO_x and VOCs from traffic react in sunlight to form ozone and other chemicals: a brown haze. It is worst in big, sunny, car-dependent cities.

Temperature inversion: normally air cools with height, so warm polluted air rises and spreads. In an inversion, a layer of **warm air sits above cool air** near the ground. The cool air cannot rise, so pollution is trapped. It is common in valleys and

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basins, on calm, clear nights and in winter.

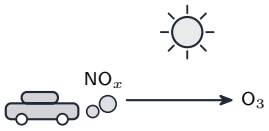
Health effects: $PM_{2.5}$ goes deep into the lungs and blood; asthma, bronchitis, heart and lung disease. Ozone irritates eyes and airways and damages crops. Outdoor air pollution causes millions of early deaths each year (WHO).

Management: catalytic converters; cleaner fuels; electric vehicles; public transport; low-emission or congestion zones; moving industry away from homes; filters on power stations; air-quality warnings.

Answer shapes: name the pollutant, its source, how it forms or moves, and its effect.

2 Practice

2.1 Distinguish between primary and secondary pollutants, giving **one** example of each. [2]



2.2 Explain how a temperature inversion traps air pollution in a city. [3]



3 Exam-style questions

3.1 The graph shows the monthly mean $PM_{2.5}$ concentration in a northern city.

(a) Describe the pattern shown. [2]



(b) Suggest **two** reasons for the pattern. [2]

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3.2 A city plans a **low-emission zone**: older, more polluting vehicles must pay a daily charge to enter the centre.

(a) Outline **two** health effects of urban air pollution. [2]

(b) Evaluate the low-emission zone. [3]



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