

《China prioritizes severe air pollution response》

China's environmental protection minister has met the press at the beginning of the Chinese New Year. On this year's working agenda, Chen Jining says improving the response to severely polluted days around the capital is a priority.

Dense smog has choked Beijing and its neighboring regions for days at a time on three occasions this winter. It has long been a concern for the public and the government. The environmental authority has promised tougher and better methods in the future.

"We'll revise the emergency response plan. The Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei area will adopt the same alert standards. We will strengthen control of key cities and highly polluting sources. That also includes research for factories to shift production time, and increase pollution charges in winter," Chen said.

China has been cutting emissions and shutting down heavy polluted factories. From 2011 to 2014, 77 million tons of steel and 29 million tons of paper production capacity has been cut. Emission cutting targets have been met. The minister says protecting the environment doesn't go against the pressure from the country's slowing economy.

"Under the pressure of slowing economy, we should make use of environmental protection to improve industrial competition. Eliminating outmoded industries can be an opportunity for more competitive ones. We cannot pursue development through low-price competition at a high environmental cost anymore," Chen said.

China's new Air Pollution Control Law has been in effect since January 1. The environmental authority vows to implement it well. The country is adopting stronger legal methods to protect the environment.