

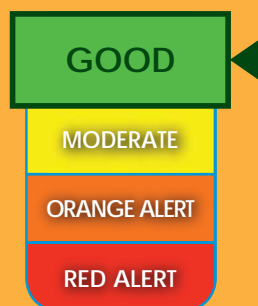


OZONE POLLUTION

Facts on the EPA's new standards



How can I protect my health?



Check the **SkyCast**, the region's daily air quality forecast. If poor air quality is expected, an **Ozone Alert** will be issued. On these days, protect your health by avoiding vigorous exercise in the middle of the day. People with respiratory problems such as asthma should use caution even when ozone concentrations are forecast to be "Moderate."

Your actions have an impact. Taking steps to reduce emissions may help reduce the number of Ozone Alerts that our region experiences.

For more information, visit www.marc.org/airQ.

What is ozone?

Ground-level ozone is a pollutant that forms when emissions from man-made sources such as cars, lawn mowers and industry react with heat and sunlight. Ozone is invisible, so high concentrations can occur even when the air appears clear.

How is ozone harmful?

Ozone irritates the sensitive tissue of the eyes, nose and lungs. This can cause inflammation, chest pain and difficulty breathing. Ozone is a problem for everyone, but it can be especially dangerous for people who have respiratory illnesses or allergies. Exposure to ozone may aggravate asthma and bronchitis symptoms, and over time, it can increase susceptibility to respiratory infection and impair lung function.

What is the standard for ozone?

For health reasons, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sets a limit on how much ozone our air can contain. Areas that do not meet these standards must develop and carry out plans to reduce the amount of ozone in their air, which often means reducing emissions. The current national standard for ozone is 84 parts per billion (ppb).

Why is the standard changing?

On March 12, 2008, the EPA announced that it will strengthen the national standard for ground-level ozone, from 84 ppb to 75 ppb. The EPA made the decision after examining more than 1,700 peer-reviewed scientific studies and consulting with its own scientific advisors and staff. The agency came to the conclusion that the current standard does not adequately protect public health.

How will this affect our region?

When the EPA reclassifies metro areas under the new standard in March 2010, our region is expected to become a "nonattainment" area. By mid-2013, the region will need to finalize a plan for reducing ozone pollution, which will likely include limits on emissions from a variety of sources. This year, area residents are likely to see a greater number of Ozone Alerts because SkyCast air quality forecasts will be based on the new ozone standard.

What can I do to reduce ozone?

- **Drive less:** carpool, use public transit, bike or walk.
- **Fuel in the evening.** This allows fumes to disperse overnight.
- Try to **mow only on green SkyCast days** (see left).
- **Encourage others to take steps to reduce emissions.**