



New Report Projects Widespread Ozone Challenges in Western United States:

Rocky Mountain States to be Hardest Hit

Summary

- New draft report prepared for Western Governor's Association shows that by 2018, broad regions of the Western United States will be suffering unhealthy ozone air pollution.
- Ozone has historically been an urban air quality problem, but latest report shows that ozone is a rural west air quality problem as well. Communities throughout Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming all projected to suffer unhealthy ozone air pollution.
- Oil and gas drilling cited as key reason for rising ozone air pollution.

The Report

- The latest draft report, which was released on July 15, was prepared by ENVIRON for the Western Regional Air Partnership, which is affiliated with the Western Governor's Association.
- Unlike recent reports from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, this latest report models the impact of air pollution from oil and gas drilling, fires, and east Pacific shipping.
- Using CMAQ model, the report models future emissions and projected ozone concentrations throughout the Western United States.

The Findings

- The report states that "In contrast to EPA national ozone modeling predictions, broad regions throughout the west are predicted to exceed and/or violate the new ozone NAAQS [National Ambient Air Quality Standards]."
- By 2018, the fourth highest ozone readings are projected to exceed 90 parts per billion in large portions of Colorado, northern New Mexico, and portions of Utah. *See Figure below (excerpted from report).* The modeling shows that it is likely that huge portions of Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming will violate the current ozone standard.

- Report states that “ozone is clearly a regional issue,” implying that it will take regional solutions to clean up this air pollution.
- Report identifies sources of air pollution related to oil and gas drilling as “likely to become a key component in regional control strategies for ozone air quality.”
- The report concludes by calling for “additional [ozone] monitors [to be installed] throughout the region.”

The Implications

- With ozone air pollution, the entire Western United States is facing one of its greatest public health crises.
- Unhealthy levels of ozone air pollution are projected to impact rural and urban areas of the Western United States alike, jeopardizing public health on a regional level.
- Even states like Wyoming, with largely rural communities, are projected to violate current air quality standards limiting ozone air pollution, something unprecedented.
- To keep people safe, states will have to reduce the air quality impacts of oil and gas drilling and curb emissions from other sources, including cars and coal-fired power plants.
- Because ozone is projected to be a regional problem, future efforts to curb ozone in the Western United States will likely require interstate cooperation to reduce the transport of pollution among the region.
- More ozone monitors will need to be installed to ensure that public health is safeguarded and that accurate data is obtained in the Western United States.