



LET'S TAKE CARE OF OUR SUMMER AIR.

OzoneAware.org

For Immediate Release

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As Summer Ozone Season Heats Up, the RAQC Says "Chill!"

Front Range residents asked to take simple steps to help reduce ozone-causing emissions.

Denver (June 1, 2005) – Today, summer ozone season officially begins for Colorado's Front Range region. At ground level, ozone pollution can be harmful to everyone, especially the young and the elderly.

To help increase awareness of ground-level ozone, the Regional Air Quality Council (RAQC) and its partners are kicking off a new "Summer Chill" campaign that asks residents to "chill" on hot summer days – to relax and avoid the activities that can cause ground-level ozone pollution such as driving, mowing the lawn and painting or staining projects.

The RAQC encourages Front Range residents, local governments and area businesses to join this so-called non-movement and take voluntary action to reduce ozone pollution in the area. At events throughout the summer and on the campaign's Web site www.OzoneAware.org, residents can take a pledge to chill – a promise to drive less, mow the lawn after 5 p.m. and refuel vehicles in the evenings. The RAQC is aiming to have 4,000 Chill Pledges signed by metro residents by the end of the summer. These small steps are critical on Ozone Action Alert days. An Ozone Action Alert day is called by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) when weather conditions can lead to unhealthy ground-level ozone concentrations in the metropolitan Denver and Front Range region.

"Ground level ozone pollution can exacerbate symptoms of a variety of health problems. By asking metro area residents to participate in the Summer Chill program, we hope to increase awareness and change behaviors that cause emissions that help create ozone," said Ken Lloyd, executive director of the RAQC.

Ground-level ozone pollution is formed when emissions from everyday items combine with other pollutants and "cook" in the heat and sunlight. Sources of such emissions include local industry, gasoline-powered vehicles and lawn equipment, and household paints, stains and solvents. Weather plays a key role in ozone formation. The highest ozone levels are usually recorded in summer months when temperatures approach the high 80s and 90s and when the wind is stagnant or light.

Ozone can trigger attacks and symptoms in people with pre-existing health conditions, such as asthma or other respiratory infections. High levels of ozone pollution often affect healthy people who work or exercise outdoors and can cause breathing difficulties, eye irritation and reduced resistance to lung infections and colds with exposure for prolonged periods.

Ozone-causing emissions come from a wide range of public activities. Some ozone-reduction activities Front Range citizens can do to reduce ground-level ozone include:

- Drive less – walk to lunch if you can and carpool whenever possible.
- “Stop at the click” – do not overfill gas tanks when refueling.
- Keep vehicles regularly maintained.
- Tighten gas caps after refueling.
- Mow in the evening after 5 p.m.
- Refuel in the evening after 5 p.m.
- Use new, earth-friendly lawn equipment.
- Avoid solvent-based products, which have pollution causing vapors – volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Use water-based paint, stain and sealants.

While the region is currently in compliance with the new, stricter ozone standard set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, it continues to flirt with the limit. The region has until 2007 to maintain compliance and receive an official attainment designation from the federal government. The simple steps the RAQC has outlined will help ensure that the Front Range region continues to meet federal air quality standards.

The Voluntary Ozone Reduction Program began in 1999 in response to unusually high ozone levels in the summer of 1998. The RAQC’s 2006 ozone education campaign – with the theme “Summer Chill” – comprises issuance of Ozone Action Alerts, advertising and community events. In addition, the RAQC will post information on the Summer Chill campaign and the Chill Pledge on the Web site www.OzoneAware.org.

For additional information on ground-level ozone, please visit this site or the RAQC’s Web site at www.raqc.org or call (303) 629-5450.

About Regional Air Quality Council

The Regional Air Quality Council (RAQC) is the lead air quality planning agency for the seven-county Denver metropolitan area. In existence since 1989, the Council’s main purpose is to develop plans and programs to keep the region in compliance with federal air quality standards, with significant input from area citizens, business, and local governments. The RAQC also oversees the development and implementation of air quality outreach and education programs throughout the region.

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