



## Ozone Outreach and Education Program (1999-ongoing)

### I. Introduction/Background

The ozone outreach program was started in 1999 after the metropolitan-Denver region experienced elevated readings exceeding the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) ground-level ozone pollution standard during the summer of 1998. The program started as a partnership with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) to send out alerts when ozone levels were forecast to reach elevated levels. The program has been expanded and refined over the years to raise awareness about ozone and the simple actions individuals can engage in to reduce their impact.

Ground-level ozone currently is the Denver region's biggest air quality concern. The Front Range region has flirted with the federal limit for several years and has violated the federal health-based standard in 2007. Partners from throughout the region assisted the Regional Air Quality Council (RAQC) and CDPHE in developing a State Implementation Plan (SIP) in 2008 to bring the Front Range region back into compliance. However, in 2008 the EPA promulgated a new, stricter ozone standard and the RAQC is now charged with developing a SIP in 2013 to meet the new federal limits. All possible strategies will be reviewed to determine the best course of action for the future. In addition, considerations will be given to the federal government's plans tighten the standard due to growing health concerns.

The ozone outreach and education program addresses the confusion over the pollutant and aims to engage citizens in changing their behaviors by adopting alternatives to everyday tasks. These include:

- stop at the click when the gasoline pump clicks off
- refuel vehicles and lawn equipment after 5 pm on hot sunny days
- mow the lawn after 5 pm
- delay painting or staining projects until later in the day or when the weather is cooler
- keep your vehicle well maintained
- use a new earth-friendly lawn mower
- reduce driving by taking alternative modes of transportation
- limit vehicle idling
- tighten your gas cap after refueling
- tightly cap all solvents, paints and stains

While seemingly individually insignificant, these behavior changes can have a large collective impact and the RAQC's goal is to greatly increase the awareness of these simple actions.

### II. Stakeholders and Partners

Over the past ten years the RAQC, in conjunction with the Air Quality Control Commission (AQCC) and CDPHE, have hosted three public stakeholder processes in an attempt to identify and discuss voluntary measures to raise awareness about ozone and reduce ozone-forming emissions. The RAQC's voluntary outreach and education programs were developed out of two main stakeholder processes, which are described below.

*Ozone Voluntary Measures Ad Hoc Committee (1998-1999)* - The Committee's charge was to develop a list of short-term recommendations that could be easily implemented prior to the start of the 1999

Summer Ozone Season. The recommendations were formally presented to, and considered by, the AQCC and RAQC.

*Reducing Ozone in the Denver Region (2002)*– a stakeholder group started by the AQCC and the RAQC was in direct response to an order from then-Gov. Owens to undertake a stakeholder process to further investigate actions to reduce pollution and keep the region in compliance with the standard. Again, the group was charged with developing a set of short- and long-term measures that could be implemented with the start of the 2003 Ozone Season and continued for up to five years following 2003.

*Ozone Early Action Compact (2003)* – recommendations from the first two stakeholder groups were discussed and suggestions were made to refine and expand the ongoing efforts.

Since the outreach and education program was developed, the RAQC has experienced great success in working with many partners through the years. The municipal governments throughout the Front Range Region have been among the RAQC's most important partners due to their critical role in making voluntary operational changes and assisting with furthering the RAQC's messages through their public information departments. The RAQC also has worked with a number of local and community organizations, such as American Lung Association of Colorado, National Jewish Medical and Research Center, 36 Commuting Solutions and Transportation Solutions, among others. Some of our private sector partners have included the Colorado Select NAPA AutoCare Group, Envirotech Systems, Inc., Suncor Energy, and Xcel Energy.

The RAQC also works closely with other government organizations such as CDPHE, DRCOG, CDOT and EPA Region 8. All of these organizations have been involved in the planning of the program and were involved in the early stakeholder meetings to address reduction measures and programs. The involved partners and stakeholders have continued to play an important part in the planning and implementation of the program.

### **III. Implementation Status**

Since the inception of the ozone outreach and education program in 1999, the RAQC has worked with its stakeholders and partners to enhance and grow the program. During the summer of 1999, the RAQC and CDPHE, along with state and local governments, businesses and citizens launched a summer ozone education effort that still exists today, beginning with the development of the Ozone Action Alert program that alerts citizens when ozone levels are forecasted to be above healthy limits.

In 2005, a large grant from the CMAQ program enabled the RAQC to launch a comprehensive outreach campaign entitled "Let's Take Care of Our Summer Air." The program takes a comprehensive approach to increasing awareness and fostering behavior change by utilizing paid media, media outreach, research and outreach to citizens and government employees to further the messages. One of the more successful components of the program is the "Mow Down Pollution" event that offers financial incentives for trading in an older, gasoline-powered lawn mower for an earth-friendly alternative. The RAQC continues to implement this program today.

### **IV. Resources**

All reports and additional ozone outreach program history can be found on the RAQC's general web site at [www.RAQC.org](http://www.RAQC.org). Additional program information can be found on the RAQC's ozone-dedicated web site at [www.OzoneAware.org](http://www.OzoneAware.org). Information about the Repair Your Air Campaign can also be found on [www.OzoneAware.org](http://www.OzoneAware.org) or [www.RepairYourAir.org](http://www.RepairYourAir.org).