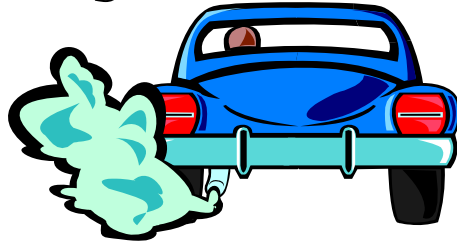


Ozone Early Action Compact



WHAT IS GROUND LEVEL OZONE?

High in the atmosphere ozone is beneficial as part of the ozone layer in blocking damaging rays from the sun. Ozone at ground level, a main component of smog, is harmful to children, outside working adults and individuals with respiratory diseases such as asthma or emphysema. Ground level ozone is formed when nitrous oxides (NOX) and volatile organic chemicals (VOCs) in exhaust from cars, trucks, industries, electric utility plants and even solvents in household chemicals react with sunlight and heat making it especially harmful during the summer months. Ground level ozone levels are high in many urban areas due to the heat island effect, but high ozone levels also affect rural areas because wind currents carry the pollutant from urban to rural areas.

For people with respiratory diseases, particles found in ground level ozone cause coughing, irritate the lungs and throat, lower lung capacity and can cause permanent scarring to the lungs after repeated exposure. Ground level ozone can also affect healthy adults and children that work and exercise outside during the summer months when the heat increases ozone levels.

Ground level ozone doesn't just effect humans; it also damages plant life and ecosystems leading to smaller agricultural yield by increasing the susceptibility of crops to disease, pests and other stresses. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) ground level ozone is responsible for an estimated \$500 million in reduced crop production each year.

WHAT IS THE EARLY ACTION COMPACT?



In 1997 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) revised the standards for ground level ozone from 1-hour "peak" standard to an 8-hour "average" standard. This new standard was set to reflect the latest information on the effects of ozone exposure and protect the health of the public through an adequate margin of safety.

The new EPA ozone standards caused many areas that were meeting the previous ozone standard to be labeled as nonattainment, meaning those areas could not meet the new standard. In 2002 the EPA agreed to allow areas that meet the 1-hour standard, such as South Carolina, to meet the new 8-hour standard by

December 31, 2007 and obtain cleaner air sooner that federally mandated. The EPA Region 4 office, the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) along with forty five counties in the state including Lexington County signed and Early Action Compact Agreement in December 2002. By signing this agreement EPA agreed to push back nonattainment designations until 2007 therefore speeding up the process of obtaining cleaner air sooner.

In Lexington County we are working to implement early measures to reduce the emissions of ozone forming air pollutants. The County has participated in gas can exchanges where older gas cans that leak and release fumes into the air are replaced with newer environmentally friendly gas cans, and free vehicle maintenance checks to check vehicles for efficiency and explain to car owners that poorly maintained vehicles not only release more pollutants into the environment but also have poor gas mileage and cost more to operate. The County has also encouraged car pooling among employees that live and work in the same areas, a Park and Ride lot was set up at Highway 378 and I-20, and is actively pursuing the purchase of electric and energy efficient equipment.

For more information on the Early Action Compact contact:

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