Ozone Action Days

Ground-level ozone (sometimes called smog) is formed from automobile, industrial and other pollutants by chemical reactions when there is bright sunshine with high temperatures. The highest ozone concentrations usually occur between 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. from May through September.

The Ozone Action Partnership is a group of businesses and organizations that take voluntary steps to help reduce the pollution that forms ozone. NJDEP declares Ozone Action Days when we're forecasting exceptionally high concentrations of ground-level ozone. Then the Partnership's participating businesses notify their employees so they can telecommute, share rides to work, use mass transit, and take other steps to help reduce smog. We also notify the press so the public can pitch in too.

Ground-level ozone can lower your resistance to diseases such as colds and pneumonia. It can also damage lung tissue, intensify heart and lung diseases (such as asthma), and cause coughing and throat irritation. Even healthy adults doing heavy exercise or manual labor outdoors may experience the unhealthy effects of ozone. Other people that are sensitive to ozone include the very young and those with pre-existing breathing problems. When ozone reaches unhealthy levels, children and people with asthma are most at risk.

Use the chart at the right to guide how you plan your driving and outdoor activities during the ozone season.

Ozone Action Forecast Scale

Unhealthy (more people affected)
- Hazy, hot and humid
- Temperatures in 90s and above
- Little or no wind

Unhealthy
- Sunny skies
- Temperatures in high 80s to 90s
- Light winds

Moderate
- Partly cloudy to sunny skies
- Temperatures in upper 70s to mid-80s
- Light to moderate winds

Good
- Partly sunny to cloudy skies or rain
- Temperatures in mid-70s to low 80s
- Windy
Recommended actions

When ground-level ozone reaches unhealthy levels:

- Children and people with asthma should reduce outdoor activities
- Healthy individuals should reduce strenuous outdoor activities such as jogging

Throughout the summer ozone season, you should:

- Properly maintain your vehicle to comply with the air pollution standards
- Make sure your car's gas cap fits properly
- Refuel cars after dusk
- Do not "top off" your tank
- Avoid unnecessary trips or consolidate trips
- Limit idling your car
- Carpool or use public transportation
- Limit the use of gasoline powered mowers
- Use water-based paints
- Barbecue without starter fluid