



Maricopa County
Air Quality Department



Valley ‘ozone season’ begins April 1 as EPA considers stricter standards

PHOENIX (March 31, 2010) – As the Valley officially enters its six-month “ozone season” April 1, the effects of anticipated stricter federal pollutant limits are being closely watched.

Ozone pollution – which pervades the air each April through September – caused 31 health watches and six High Pollution Advisories (HPAs) last year, a marked improvement from 2008 when the Valley experienced 44 ozone health watches and 11 ozone HPAs.

But this year the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is reconsidering the level of the ozone standard because the medical evidence shows that the standard set in 2007 of .075 parts per million may not adequately protect public health. A decision is expected by EPA by the end of August. That decision may lead to not only more HPA and health watch designations but more areas of the state being out of compliance with the standard.

Ground level ozone pollution is a direct irritant to lung tissue in addition to triggering asthma and other respiratory symptoms and can damage the lungs from exposure over long periods of time. It can also damage plants and crops and tarnish paint and other items outdoors. Valley air is monitored daily by the Air Quality Division of the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality.

“Ozone pollution is a serious threat to public health for people in the Phoenix metropolitan area. The year 2009 was better for clean air and public health than 2008 but it was still unacceptable. The good news is we can accelerate the pace of environmental progress if we continue to increase opportunities for smart transportation and pollution reduction,” said ADEQ Director Benjamin H. Grumbles.

“The health impacts from ozone pollution are a serious motivator for all of us to practice pollution prevention in our daily routines,” states Max Porter, acting director for the Maricopa County Air Quality Department. “By taking small, simple action every day, we all can make a difference.”

“Making a contribution to the quality of our air is based on our individual actions. Commuters in the Valley are choosing to be more green by carpooling, riding transit and teleworking,” said David Boggs, Valley Metro executive director. “Based on trips that commuters logged in the Valley Metro online ridematching system, about 4,000 individuals kept 551,000 pounds of greenhouse gases out of the air in the past year.”

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Ozone pollution prevention tips:

- Drive less. When possible, carpool, van pool or use public transportation
- Avoid waiting in long drive-thru lines, for example, at coffee shops, fast-food restaurants or banks. Park your car and go inside
- Refuel your vehicle after dark or during cooler evening hours
- Use low-VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds) or water-based paints, stains, finishes and paint strippers
- Delay big painting projects until high-pollution advisories or health watches have passed
- Make sure containers of household cleaners, garage and yard chemicals and other solvents are sealed properly to prevent vapors from evaporating into the air
- Conserve electricity

To track how much pollution your commute generates, visit www.ValleyMetro.org and select ShareTheRide. Sign up to receive air quality updates by email or text message at www.CleanAirMakeMore.com

OZONE BACKGROUND: Ground level ozone is formed by a chemical reaction that needs heat from sunlight, nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds [VOCs] to form. The months of April through September make up our Valley's longer-than-normal "ozone season."

WHO'S WHO?

The **Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ)** provides a daily forecast for air quality. When conditions exist, ADEQ will issue high pollution advisories, health watches and alerts. Daily air quality forecasts are on ADEQ's Web site at www.azdeq.gov/environ/air/ozone/ensemble.pdf or by calling (602)771-2367. Those interested in receiving the air quality forecast via email and/or text alerts can subscribe to ADEQ's Air Quality Forecasts and Advisories list at www.azdeq.gov/subscribe.html

The **Maricopa County Air Quality Department** issues No Burn Day restrictions based on a high pollution advisory or health watch. These No Burn Day restrictions typically occur during the winter months. To find out if any burn restrictions are in place, call 602-506-6400 or visit www.cleanairmakemore.com Information is given in both English and Spanish.

To learn more about the Maricopa County residential woodburning restriction ordinance, view a copy on our website www.maricopa.gov/aq Click on the direct link to the residential woodburning restriction ordinance:
http://www.maricopa.gov/aq/divisions/planning_analysis/rules/docs/rwro9911.pdf

Valley Metro/RPTA provides eco-friendly public transit options to residents of greater Phoenix and Maricopa County, including a clean-fuel bus fleet, low-emissions light rail, online carpool matching and bus trip mapping, and bicycle and telework assistance. Funding is provided by local, state and federal revenues and administered by a board of 15 governments working to improve and regionalize the public transit system. www.ValleyMetro.org

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