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[ UNLEASHING THE POWER OF GREEN ]

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## No foolin': April 1 marks start of ozone season public should limit outdoor activities during warnings

### Solutions exist to solve the ozone pollution conundrum

Columbus, OH – April 1<sup>st</sup> marks the first day of the ozone season in Ohio, according to U.S. EPA guidelines. Area monitors that sample pollution levels are activated beginning that day.

Ground level ozone – or “smog” – is formed when the mixture of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) cook in the summer sun. Common sources of these pollutants include emissions and fumes from motor vehicles, industrial and utility smokestacks, chemical solvents, and natural sources.

According to the Ohio EPA, Ohio last year, cars and trucks emitted more than 253,000 tons of nitrogen oxides.

Scientists and medical researchers have linked exposure to ozone pollution to:

- airway irritation, coughing, and pain when taking a deep breath;
- wheezing and breathing difficulties during exercise or outdoor activities;
- lung inflammation, similar to a sunburn on the skin;
- aggravation of asthma and increased susceptibility to respiratory illnesses like pneumonia and bronchitis; and,
- permanent lung damage with repeated exposures.

“Air quality alert days are no joke. When one is issued, the public best heed the warning to limit outdoor activities,” states David R. Celebrezze, Director of Air & Water Special Projects for Ohio Environmental Council.

“Until we can successfully reduce these harmful pollutants, we will be burdened with poor air and its impacts on our health.”

Those at greatest risk to impacts from ozone exposure include the elderly, people 18 and younger, people with asthma (over 1.1 million in Ohio) or other respiratory illness, and anyone who works or exercises outside. In Ohio, an estimated 37% (4.3 million) of the population is either 65 and older or 18 and younger. Additionally, construction workers, police officers, farmers, and mail carriers may be exposed to ozone throughout the day.

The state and local governments have taken steps to address many sources of ozone-forming pollution.

Ohio currently meets the ozone standard, which was last updated in 1997. A new, more protective standard was adopted in 2008 following a review of air quality data and medical research. This standard is to take affect this year. The new standard prohibits ozone levels that exceed ozone levels of .075parts per billion.

Every major metropolitan area in Ohio is expected to fail the new standard, along with counties where large coal-fired power plants are located.

The Ohio EPA has argued that the US EPA should not strengthen the standard below its current level of 0.075 ppb, despite calls from the federal Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee to strengthen the standard, setting it between .06ppb and .07ppb. This committee provides independent advice to the U.S. EPA on the technical basis for the air quality standards.

“Clean air has come a long way in Ohio, but we cannot rest on our laurels,” states Celebrezze, “The data tells us that thousands of Ohioans will be rushed to hospital emergency rooms this year from exposure to ozone smog.”

The OEC recommends federal, state and local governments take a leadership role in protecting public health:

#### Local

- Implement a fuel conservation ordinance that requires no more than 5 minutes worth of engine idling in a 60 minute time period.
- Local governments should adjust construction contracts to prefer clean fleet projects that can achieve deep reductions in tailpipe emissions.

#### State

- Adopt a fuel conservation law similar to Illinois’, which requires no more than 5 minutes of idling in a 60 minute time frame in areas that do not meet federal air quality standards.
- The Strickland Administration and the General Assembly should fund the Ohio Diesel Emission Reduction Grant Program at \$50 million a year.
- The state should adopt green construction contract language to require all contractors at public construction projects that cost \$2 million or more to install pollution controls or convert construction equipment engines to compressed natural gas.
- Inventory the state’s diesel vehicles and retire old, heavily polluting vehicles and install pollution controls on the remaining fleet. When purchasing new vehicles, purchase only compressed natural gas vehicles or vehicles that have an emission control device.
- Develop a program of low interest, state bond-supported, bridge financing to assist state and local governments to replace older, heavily polluting equipment.

#### Federal

- Congress should fund the Diesel Emission Reduction Act at \$1 billion a year (for every dollar spent on diesel clean up, an average of \$13 is realized in health and economic benefit).
- Adopt clean construction language in the Reauthorization Transportation Bill. Ohio Senator Voinovich, Representatives Bocchieri and Latta are in positions to influence this solution.

- Resolve the Clean Air Interstate Rule and require power plants to reduce their NOx emissions by 60%

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The mission of the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) is to secure healthy air, land, and water for all who call Ohio home. The OEC is Ohio's leading advocate for fresh air, clean water, and sustainable land use. The OEC has a 40-year history of innovation, pragmatism, and success. Using legislative initiatives, legal action, scientific principles, and statewide partnerships, the OEC secures a healthier environment for Ohio's families and communities. For more information, visit [www.theOEC.org](http://www.theOEC.org).