New Ozone Standard Now in Effect
On March 12, 2008 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) significantly strengthened its national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) for ground-level ozone, the primary component of smog. These changes will improve both public health protection and the protection of sensitive trees and plants. In the hot, sunny southwest climate, we anticipate there could be more High Pollution Advisories (HPAs) and Health Watches called by the Arizona Department of Quality (ADEQ) this summer.

Concerns About Ozone
Ozone that exists at ground-level is created by mixing volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and oxides of nitrogen (NOx) with sunlight. The VOCs and the NOx stem from these emissions sources: industrial and electrical facilities, motor vehicle exhaust, gas vapors and chemical solvents. Between April 1 and September 30, the levels of ozone in the Phoenix area are on the rise due to higher temperatures on sunny, hot days.

Health-related concerns are a major reason why we should take action to prevent the creation of ozone sources. Ozone is unhealthy to breathe and negatively affects plant growth causing reduced crop and forest yields. Anyone who spends time outdoors during periods of high ozone levels may experience a variety of health problems including chest pain, coughing and congestion.

Health-related Effects of Ozone
Breathing ozone is damaging to the respiratory system and can reduce lung function. Repeated exposure can even cause permanent damage by scarring lung tissue. Here are a few reasons why we should be concerned about breathing ground-level ozone:

- Increases susceptibility to respiratory infection and lung inflammation
- Aggravates asthma, bronchitis and emphysema
- Increases hospital admissions for respiratory ailments
- Reduces lung function—even during periods of moderate exertion

Tips to Reduce Ozone
Taking a few steps to reduce the elements that cause ozone can make a big difference, especially when a High Pollution Advisory (HPA) is announced. Here’s what you can do when commuting or running errands:

- Reduce driving: carpool, ride the bus, walk, bike or telework
- Go online to ValleyMetro.org to find carpool or vanpool partners
- Call (602) 262-RIDE if you don’t have Internet access or have questions about ways to rideshare to reduce ozone
- Sign up to receive the Ozone HPA notices via e-mail by registering at www.ValleyMetro.org

Things Valley Residents Can Do at Home:

- Don’t top off your tank—spilled gasoline and its vapors are an ozone-creating element
- Refuel AFTER dark
- Switch from gas-powered to electric-powered lawn equipment
- Use a rake instead of a leaf blower—especially on hot days
- Sign up for your utility’s energy conservation program
- Seal containers of household cleaners, chemicals and solvents to prevent volatile gases from evaporating into the air
When an Ozone Health Watch is Issued:

- Children and adults with respiratory problems, including asthma, should consider limiting prolonged or heavy exertion outdoors.
- Combine vehicle trips to save gas and money (a cold engine decreases efficiency by as much as 80%).
- Call ahead for directions to avoid excess driving.
- Refuel your vehicle during the cooler part of the day or wait to refuel until the health watch is over.
- Check out bus schedules to see if riding the bus is an option.
- Parents and adults with respiratory problems are encouraged to be attentive to the daily air quality forecast in the event an ozone high pollution advisory is issued.
- Call the Smoking Vehicle Hotline (602-372-2703) to report the Arizona license plate number of an excessively polluting vehicle.
- Use alternatives to lighter fluid when starting the grill, such as an electric probe.

When an Ozone High Pollution Advisory is Issued:

- Active children and adults with respiratory problems, including asthma, should AVOID prolonged or heavy exertion outdoors. Everyone else should LIMIT prolonged or heavy exertion outdoors.
- Motorists should limit driving and vehicle idling as much as possible.
- Use of gasoline-powered lawn and garden equipment should be deferred until the High Pollution Advisory is lifted.
- Telework or utilize a “flex” day if possible.

Air Quality Resources

Valley Metro: [www.ValleyMetro.org](http://www.ValleyMetro.org)

Maricopa County Air Quality Department: RunningOutofAir.com


Environmental Protection Agency:
  - Air Pollution: [http://www.epa.gov/ebtpages/air.html](http://www.epa.gov/ebtpages/air.html)
  - Clear Skies: [http://www.epa.gov/air/clearskies/state/az.html](http://www.epa.gov/air/clearskies/state/az.html)
  - For Kids: [http://www.epa.gov/airnow/aqikids/index.html](http://www.epa.gov/airnow/aqikids/index.html)


Pima County Department of Environmental Quality: [http://www.airinfonow.org](http://www.airinfonow.org)

“Google” Arizona Air Pollution and you’ll get more than 4.6 million links!