



Colorado Department  
of Public Health  
and Environment

*“To protect and improve  
the health and environment  
of the people of Colorado.”*

# NEWS

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## **Denver Area Close to Exceeding Federal Ozone Standards**

DENVER---State health department ozone experts today reported that preliminary ozone monitoring data from one of the state’s monitoring stations, the Rocky Flats North monitoring station, indicated that the Front Range area soon may fall out of compliance with federal ozone standards. Four consecutive high ozone readings at any particular site would put the Denver region out of compliance. One more high reading at this site would do so.

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment’s executive director, Jim Martin, said, “Ozone levels are constantly monitored and are a high priority for the department and the administration because of the health effects associated with high ozone readings. Ensuring that we attain the federal standard for ozone is important to protect public health. If we exceed the current federal standard soon or need to comply with more stringent ozone standards in the future we will take the necessary action to make sure Colorado’s ozone levels are in compliance.”

The Regional Air Quality Council, in cooperation with the department, issues Ozone Action Alerts on days when division meteorologists expect conditions to lead to ground-level ozone concentrations of 75 ppb or above in the metropolitan-Denver and Front Range region. Because high ozone levels can compromise public health, especially among children, the elderly and those with pre-existing respiratory conditions such as asthma, Martin advised individuals to stay indoors when ozone alerts are issued.

He added that individuals can take steps to help reduce ozone concentrations by refueling in the evening, keeping vehicles well maintained and not overfilling gas tanks, mowing lawns in the evening, tightening gas caps after fill-ups, and doing painting projects in the evening.

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## Ozone – Page 2

Martin noted that for three summers, Colorado has met the federal ozone standard. “Last year the Colorado Air Quality Control Commission adopted some of the nation’s toughest regulations on emissions from oil and gas development, with the expectation that the regulations would help reduce ozone levels. Those measures, in conjunction with many others on the books, are very important to manage and reduce ozone levels. But we continue to look for ways to lower ozone concentrations.”

The current federal health-based standard for ground-level ozone is 80 parts per billion (ppb) measured over eight hours. In June, the Environmental Protection Agency proposed to lower the ground-level ozone standard to a level between 70 and 75 ppb measured over eight hours, and the agency reports that it will finalize a new federal standard next spring.

“We have been watching the ozone levels closely this summer to understand how the meteorology is working with the various emission control strategies that are in place to reduce ozone concentrations in the area,” said Paul Tourangeau, director of the Air Pollution Control Division at the Department of Public Health and Environment. “The air quality professionals in the division also are working to identify measures we could take to make significant improvement in ozone levels,” said Tourangeau.

In the event that there is a fourth high reading this summer at any one of the ozone monitoring sites, Tourangeau said the Air Pollution Control Division will work with the Regional Air Quality Council to develop a plan to further reduce ozone concentrations to attain the standard.

“Once there is a fourth high reading at a particular site, the Regional Air Quality Council will take the lead and work with the Air Pollution Control Division to formulate air quality plans to address ground-level ozone in the Denver area,” he said.

Governor Bill Ritter recently appointed nine new members to the 11-member council. Any ozone control plan proposed by the council, in conjunction with the Air Pollution Control Division, would have to be approved by the Colorado Air Quality Control Commission, and then approved by EPA under the Clean Air Act.

“We intend to work closely with the Regional Air Quality Council, as well as the Air Quality Control Commission, the business community, the medical community, conservationists and others to move as rapidly as we can to put new or revised measures in place to reduce ozone pollution, and to keep the Front Range area in attainment for ozone,” said Martin.

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### **Ozone – Page 3**

Martin continued, “In the process, we also will be looking at things that can be done to meet the more stringent ozone standards that the Environmental Protection Agency is considering. The department is confident that we can meet this challenge, given the spirit of collaboration we have seen from industry, public health officials, conservationists and others in the past.”

Until an evaluation of ozone control measures is complete, it is not known what strategies would be relied upon in the Front Range area to achieve the health-based standard for ozone.

Information regarding the region’s effort to maintain compliance with the federal standard is best viewed on a Web page maintained by the Air Pollution Control Division. <http://apcd.state.co.us/psi/ozone.htm>. Tables located at this site provide an overview of the region’s status.