



State of Utah

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Environmental Quality

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Weather and public applauded

Data shows a 3 year decline in ozone

Salt Lake City, Utah – Summertime ozone is on the decline thanks to fewer triple-digit degree days and growing public participation to limit driving when pollution begins to build.

Division of Air Quality (DAQ) data shows fewer “red” air alerts were issued during the last three summers when ozone pollution exceeds the federal standard of .075 parts per million (ppm) and becomes unhealthy or troublesome for people to breathe. DAQ issues a “yellow” before smog worsens in hopes of encouraging the public to limit driving because vehicle exhaust, mixed with sunlight and heat, is one of the main ingredients of ozone.

“Although weather has a lot to do with the fact that we are seeing a decline in ozone, I do believe that the public has become more responsive and aware of the need to drive smarter on days when pollution builds,” said Cheryl Heying, director of DAQ. “We acknowledge and appreciate the public support in making our air cleaner.”

DAQ monitors air pollution hourly and provides a three-day forecast on its Web site:
<http://www.airquality.utah.gov/>.

Amanda Smith, executive director of the Department of Environmental Quality, credits the three-day forecasts, which this year expanded to include Box Elder and Washington counties, for making it easier for people to know pollution conditions and plan accordingly. She also applauds the Utah Department of Transportation for posting the advisories along major highway corridors to remind motorists of deteriorating air quality conditions. And Smith recognizes the contributions of clean air advocates for raising the awareness.

“I applaud everyone for doing their part to improve Utah’s air,” Smith said. “It is making a difference.”

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As noted in the attached reports, Utah did not exceed the ozone standard, which is a three-year average. The Division of Air Quality monitors for ozone at 13 sites along the Wasatch Front. The Environmental Protection Agency determines if there is a violation of the ozone standard based on a three year average. The three-year average of the ozone standard was slightly exceeded in 2007-2009, at four locations and five locations between 2006 and 2008. (See attached summary.)

“Weather does play a big role in ozone but we can predict with some sense of certainty when the ozone may be reaching unhealthy limits and we can call the public to take action and do its part to help curb pollution,” said Bo Call, manager of the Air Monitoring Center. “People appear to be taking action, which is great to see.”

Soon DAQ will begin focusing on tracking the wintertime pollution – the hard-to-see particles caused primarily by vehicle emissions, wood burning stoves and fireplaces that can shroud the valley in pollution-trapping inversions. On Nov. 1, the wood-burning restrictions go into effect.

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