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NEWS RELEASE

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DAQ Switches to Tracking Summer Ozone

Salt Lake City, Utah – With temperatures *finally* heating up, the Utah Division of Air Quality’s (DAQ) three-day forecast is now alerting people of summer smoggy conditions caused by increased levels of ozone – a chemical reaction from vehicle emissions and industrial sources are mixed with sunlight and heat. Ozone pollution becomes more troublesome on hot summer days and can make it difficult for people to breathe.

“Summer is a great time to be outdoors,” said Bryce Bird, director of DAQ. “Smoggy conditions, however, can make it unpleasant and even unhealthy at times. It’s important for people to check air quality in the summer to protect their health and also to make choices to prevent the pollution from getting worse.”

People can visit <http://www.airquality.utah.gov/> and click on “forecast” to find a color-coded three day forecast for Salt Lake, Davis, Cache, Weber, Utah, Box Elder, Tooele, and Washington counties. “Green” means air quality is good and people are encouraged to make clean air choices to help keep air pollution levels low. “Yellow” means the pollution is building and people are encouraged to take proactive steps by voluntarily carpooling, consolidating vehicle trips, and avoiding idling or mowing the lawn in the middle of the day. “Red” means pollution levels are critically high, and residents should avoid using gasoline and diesel powered engines.

The Environmental Protection Agency is expected to tighten the ozone standard, now set at 75 parts per billion of ozone in the air. Concentrations above that are considered unhealthy, especially for the very young and old and people with heart and lung problems but more studies show ozone also affects healthy people. High ozone can cause people to suffer various inflammation problems that can lead to other health problems.

The ozone season comes just in time to welcome back Bo Call, manager of the Air Monitoring Center, who has been serving a six-month-long deployment for the U.S. Air Force Reserves. He is expected to return to work by mid-June.

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