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State Air Emission Inventory Online

Air Data Shows Emissions Widespread, Not One Source

Salt Lake City, Utah – There isn't one big polluter along the Wasatch Front and Cache Valley that alone causes wintertime pollution, according to data compiled by the Division of Air Quality (DAQ), now available online at:

airquality.utah.gov/Public-Interest/Current-Issues/pm2.5/presentations/index.html.

DAQ created an Interactive Data Explorer to allow public access to information about the sources of Utah's winter air pollution. The inventory is part of the three-year effort that includes participation from over 100 stakeholders to develop an air quality plan. Facing a December deadline, the State Implementation Plan (SIP) will outline strategies to bring counties along the Wasatch Front and Cache Valley into compliance with federal health-based air quality standards for wintertime pollution, focusing on Particulate Matter 2.5 micrometers in size (PM_{2.5}) – particles less than one-fortieth the size of a human hair.

“There is no single, silver bullet to meet the federal standards,” said Bryce Bird, director of the DAQ. “The emissions are coming from about 10,000 individual polluters, so our solutions need to include meaningful reductions from a large number of emitters. That necessitates participation from more people if we are to improve Utah's air quality.”

The emissions inventory data explorer quantifies the emissions generated by various source categories for each county for a typical winter day. To understand where there is the greatest potential for reduction, people using the site should focus on the emissions of PM_{2.5} that are responsible for nearly a third of the particles measured on the air sampling filters and provide the most direct reduction to pollution concentrations.

The remaining 70 to 75 percent is emitted, not as particles, but formed in the atmosphere under winter inversion conditions. “There's a chain of chemical reactions and the primary driver is volatile organic compounds (VOC), which are emitted as gases from an array of products like cleaning supplies, pesticides, paints, fuels and food preparation ,” Bird said. “So controlling the

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VOCs provides the biggest benefit in reducing the chemically-formed particles.”

Bird said if everyone just pledged to do *something* to reduce pollution, overall it can make a big improvement to Utah’s air.

“Improving Utah’s air quality will take a commitment from everyone,” Bird said. “I encourage people to visit U-CAIR (ucair.utah.gov) to find out what you can do now on the personal, business and government levels for cleaner air.”

Vehicle emissions are a big part of the air pollution problem, Bird said.

“Fifty-five percent of emissions from all sources in Salt Lake County are from vehicles,” he added. “Improvements in vehicle emissions are projected as newer vehicles with better fuel economy and emission controls replace the older fleet of vehicles. In addition, work on a regional basis to reduce vehicle emissions through traffic signal coordination and transit improvements will result in lower projected emissions. Individual choices like reducing travel through carpools, public transportation, telecommuting, and vehicle maintenance, provide significant reductions in emissions with the added benefit of fuel savings for the driving public.”

Large industry does not get a pass on emission reductions. Engineers at DAQ are currently reviewing the permits for the largest industrial sources to identify and require additional controls that significantly reduce the targeted direct PM_{2.5} and VOC emissions.

The Environmental Protection Agency mandated that the State develop a SIP for Box Elder, Cache, Davis, Salt Lake, Tooele, Utah and Weber counties after air monitoring showed failure to meet federal health standards. Fine particulate pollution can get trapped in the lungs, causing inflammation. It also is an irritant, especially to sensitive groups like children and people with asthma.

The SIP will identify new emission-reducing controls to be implemented by 2018. The public will also have several opportunities to comment on new SIP proposals through stakeholder workgroups.

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