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**NEWS RELEASE**

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## ***Warmer Temps, Sunny Days Means the Start of Ozone Season***

*DEQ's Division of Air Quality starts providing alerts for Utah's summertime pollution*

SALT LAKE CITY — Starting today, The Utah Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) Division of Air Quality (DAQ) began issuing alerts for ozone pollution in 12 of Utah's 29 counties. Ozone builds up gradually on hot summer days. The typical recipe for ozone in Utah occurs when oxides of nitrogen (NOx) — mainly emissions from vehicle tailpipes, diesel engines and industrial sources — and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) break apart under intense sunlight and reform as ozone. At ground level, ozone is a pollutant that damages human health and is a key ingredient in summertime smog. The highest ground level ozone concentrations usually occur between 2-8 p.m., May through September. Ground level ozone should not be confused with stratospheric ozone, which protects the surface of Earth from the sun's ultraviolet light and is formed in an entirely different way.

"Emissions from vehicles and vapors that come from paints, solvents and fuels can be reduced significantly through a few simple actions," said Bryce Bird, director of DEQ's Division of Air Quality. "The best choices we all can make during the summer months to protect human health is to regularly leave our vehicles parked for the day and find other ways to get around, limit the use of gas-powered lawn equipment, as well as choosing paints, solvents and other products that are low in VOCs — especially on sunny days with calm winds and afternoon temperatures above 90 degrees when ground level ozone is most likely to form."

In 2015, the federal ozone standard was lowered from 75 parts per billion (ppb) to 70 ppb. In 2018, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designated the Wasatch Front and parts of the Uinta Basin as "Marginal" nonattainment of the 8-hour standard for ozone pollution — the least stringent classification.

DAQ issues two types of forecasts during the summer:

1. **Action Alerts:** The action alerts notify the public of the steps they can take to combat current pollution levels. Three basic symbols are used to indicate unrestricted, voluntary and mandatory actions for ozone pollution.
  - Unrestricted Action (symbol = circle): No restrictions, but visible emissions from solid-fuel burning devices must meet air quality regulations.

- Voluntary Action (symbol = inverted triangle): Residents are asked to voluntarily TravelWise by consolidating trips and choosing cleaner transportation options. Limit volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions.
  - Mandatory Action (symbol = X): Employers activate mandatory trip reduction programs. Residents should TravelWise by consolidating trips and choosing cleaner transportation options. Limit volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions.
2. **Health Guidance:** The health guidance helps determine how the highest pollution level of the day will affect human health. EPA's national standard Air Quality Index (AQI) is divided into six, color-coded categories that correspond to different levels of pollution and related guidance for individuals with health concerns.

DAQ encourages Utah residents to visit the Utah Clean Air Partnership (UCAIR) website, [ucair.org](http://ucair.org), for more tips and ideas on how to reduce emissions, and to TravelWise, [travelwise.utah.gov](http://travelwise.utah.gov), during the summer months.

DAQ will provide Utah residents with air quality forecasting throughout the summer through its UtahAir app (free for both iOS and Android), on the web at [airquality.utah.gov](http://airquality.utah.gov), and through a toll-free messages at 1-800-228-5434.

#### **About DEQ**

Established in 1991, the Utah Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) mission is to safeguard and improve Utah's air, land and water through balanced regulation. DEQ implements state and federal environmental laws and works with individuals, community groups and businesses to protect the quality of Utah's air, land and water. For more information, visit [deq.utah.gov](http://deq.utah.gov), follow DEQ on Facebook ([utahdeq](https://www.facebook.com/utahdeq)) and Twitter ([UtahDEQ](https://twitter.com/UtahDEQ)).