



WHAT IS AN OZONE ACTION DAY?

An Ozone Action Day means that weather conditions are favorable for the formation of higher than normal levels of ozone.

The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) issues Ozone Action Day Alerts when the Air Quality Index (AQI) forecast is above 100, categorized as Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups or Code Orange. This happens when sunlight combines with Volatile Organic compounds (VOC) and Nitrogen Oxides (NO_x) and form higher than normal levels of ozone near the ground that may cause harmful health effects. Increasing ozone levels may cause unhealthy air quality for the general population. Active children and adults, the elderly and people with respiratory diseases, such as asthma, should avoid prolonged outdoor activities. Everyone else, especially children, should avoid prolonged outdoor exertion. Ozone is a colorless gas that exists in the earth's stratosphere and protects us from the sun's ultraviolet rays. However, when ozone forms near the earth's surface it can be a harmful air pollutant.

LDEQ forecasts ozone action days using a number of factors. They include cloud cover, the presence of ozone precursors (VOC and NO_x), wind speed and direction. In Louisiana, we tend to see ozone alerts May through September when high-pressure systems stall over the area. Ozone alerts are more common on very sunny days with little or no wind for mixing.

When LDEQ issues an Ozone Action Day Alert, they request industry to take voluntary measures to reduce ozone precursor emissions into the atmosphere. You can help by participating in these voluntary steps:

- Drive Less – Carpool, take public transportation, walk more, bring your lunch to work and combine errands
- Do not idle your car in carpool lines or use the drive-thru. Turn off your engine and go into the restaurant or business. You create less pollution by stopping and restarting your engine than you do idling.
- Refuel when the sun is nearer to the horizon – typically after 6 p.m.
- Mow grass and use other gas powered lawn equipment and off road vehicles after 6 p.m.
- Postpone chores that use oil based paint, varnishes and solvents (that are flammable) to another, preferably more windy day.
- If you barbeque, use an electric starter or a chimney starter instead of lighter fluid.

Conserve energy in your home. Set your thermostats a little higher when you are not at home to conserve energy and to help reduce the load placed on power producers. Not only will it save you money on your utility bills, but it also reduces the amount of precursor emissions produced by the power company.

If you would like to get a free notification of daily air quality, you can sign up for Enviroflash at www.deq.louisiana.gov/page/enviroflash.

To obtain real time air quality information, go to. <http://airquality.deq.louisiana.gov/>.

To see the regional air quality information, go to <http://weather.gov/lix>.

