



Colorado Department  
of Public Health  
and Environment

*“To protect and improve  
the health and environment  
of the people of Colorado.”*

# NEWS

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## **Denver Region Violates Federal Ozone Standard**

DENVER---High concentrations of ground-level ozone on Friday, July 20 appear to have put the nine-county Denver region in violation of the federal health-based eight-hour standard for the troublesome pollutant.

Preliminary data from an air quality monitor maintained by the department’s Air Pollution Control Division in northern Jefferson County near the Boulder County line indicate an eight-hour rolling average ozone concentration of .088 parts per million (ppm) on Friday evening. If validated, that reading – when considered along with other readings this summer and during 2005 and 2006 at the Rocky Flats North monitoring station – will result in a violation of federal health-based standard.

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment’s executive director, Jim Martin, said, “The department, the Colorado Air Quality Control Commission, and partners like the Regional Air Quality Council and the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization are committed to taking the actions necessary to lower ground-level ozone concentrations to ensure full compliance with the health-based standards for ozone.”

The Regional Air Quality Council, in cooperation with the department, issues Ozone Action Alerts on days when division meteorologists expect conditions to lead to ground-level ozone concentrations of .075 ppm or above in the metropolitan-Denver and Front Range region. Because high ozone levels can compromise public health, especially among children, the elderly and those with pre-existing respiratory conditions such as asthma, Martin advised individuals to be aware of ozone alerts when they are issued.

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“Ozone is a public health concern,” Martin said. “Whether or not a violation has occurred, our region usually has numerous days during any given summer when ozone concentrations are high enough to compromise human health, especially among sensitive populations.”

He again reminded residents to consider taking steps to help reduce ozone concentrations by refueling vehicles in the evening, keeping vehicles well maintained and not overfilling gas tanks, mowing lawns in the evening, tightening gas caps after fill-ups, and doing painting projects in the evening.

The current federal health-based standard for ground-level ozone is .080 ppm measured over eight hours. In June, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed to lower the ground-level ozone standard to a level between .070 and .075 ppm measured over eight hours, and the agency reports that it will finalize a new federal standard next spring.

If the data collected this summer is validated, the EPA likely will designate the nine-county region (Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, Jefferson, Larimer and Weld counties) as out of compliance with the existing eight-hour ozone standard and the area will be considered to be a “nonattainment” area.

The department’s Air Pollution Control Division, along with the Regional Air Quality Council and the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization, will work to develop a plan to further reduce ozone concentrations to attain the standard.

The plan will be submitted to the Colorado Air Quality Control Commission for approval by the end of 2008, with legislative and gubernatorial approval expected after that. Once all state approval processes have been complete, the plan ultimately will be submitted to the EPA for approval by April 2009.

Martin said, “We will be looking at strategies for reducing ozone concentrations thoroughly, including the costs associated with implementing various strategies. We also will consider the proposed tougher standards throughout the process. I remain confident that we can meet this challenge.”

Martin continued, “The development of the plan and the approval process will be an open, collaborative one. We will seek input from the public, industry, conservationists and others and will continue to function in the spirit of collaboration that has worked so well in the past.”

Until an evaluation of ozone control measures is complete, it is not known what strategies would be relied upon in the Front Range area to achieve the health-based standard for ozone.

Information regarding the region's effort to maintain compliance with the federal standard is best viewed on Web pages maintained by the Air Pollution Control Division. Those interested can access the division's information at <http://coloradoairquality.info/>. Information available includes current and historic ozone data, current and historic air quality data, the current advisory and background materials on a wide range of air quality topics.

Individuals also can learn the current advisory status and current air quality conditions by calling one of several telephone hotlines maintained by the division. Those within the seven-county Denver-metropolitan area (in the 303 and 720 area codes) can call either 303-758-4848 or 303-782-0211. Those in Larimer and Weld counties or any other part of the state can call the division's toll-free hotline at 1-888-484-3247 (1-888-4-THE-AIR).