

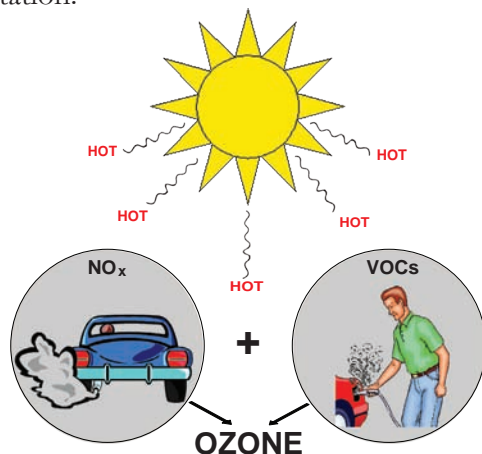
What is ozone?

Ozone is an odorless, colorless gas that forms in the atmosphere when three atoms of oxygen are combined. It can be helpful or harmful, depending on where it is located.

- Ozone in the upper atmosphere, or stratosphere, is good. Up high, it is natural and helps protect us from the sun's ultraviolet rays.
- Ozone at ground level is bad. Near the surface of the earth, in the air we breathe, ozone is unnatural, hazardous to our health, and an air pollutant.

Ozone is not emitted directly into the air, but is created by a chemical reaction between nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in the presence of heat and strong sunlight.

Hot, sunny summers in many parts of Idaho provide the ideal setting for the formation of ground-level ozone. Pollutants that cause ozone come from motor vehicle exhaust, industrial emissions, gasoline vapors, chemical solvents, and vegetation.



For more information

Idaho Department of Environmental Quality

1410 N. Hilton
Boise, ID 83706
(208) 373-0502

Boise Regional Office

1445 North Orchard
Boise, ID 83706
(208) 373-0550
toll-free: (888) 800-3480

Lewiston Regional Office

1118 F Street
Lewiston, ID 83501
(208) 799-4370
toll-free: (877) 541-3304

Coeur d'Alene Regional Office

2110 Ironwood Parkway
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814
(208) 769-1422
toll-free: (877) 370-0017

Pocatello Regional Office

444 Hospital Way #300
Pocatello, ID 83201
(208) 236-6160
toll-free: (888) 655-6160

Idaho Falls Regional Office

900 N. Skyline, Suite B
Idaho Falls, ID 83402
(208) 528-2650
toll-free: (800) 232-4635

Twin Falls Regional Office

1363 Fillmore Street
Twin Falls, ID 83301
(208) 736-2190
toll-free: (800) 270-1663

Log on:

DEQ Web site
www.deq.idaho.gov

Daily air quality conditions and advisories
www.deq.idaho.gov/air/aqindex.cfm



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Summertime Air Quality

Ground-Level Ozone

Protecting your health and air quality



Idaho Department of
Environmental Quality
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Boise, ID 83706
(208) 373-0502
www.deq.idaho.gov

Ozone and your health

Ground-level ozone is an air pollutant, and like any other pollutant, it can be dangerous to your health.

Inhaling ground-level ozone can damage lung tissue. It may cause irritation in airways, coughing, rapid or shallow breathing, discomfort when breathing, or general chest discomfort. It can aggravate asthma and other respiratory diseases, reduce lung function, and inflame and damage lung tissue.

Breathing ozone is bad for everyone, although it is most harmful to children, adults who are active outdoors, and people with respiratory disease.

Ground-level ozone also can adversely affect animals and plants.

What is the "ozone standard"?

To protect our health and the quality of the air we breathe, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sets limits on the amounts of certain pollutants that can safely be in our air. These limits are called the National Ambient Air Quality Standards or NAAQS. When geographic areas exceed these standards, they must take steps to lower pollutant levels.

On March 12, 2008, EPA lowered the standard for ground-level ozone air pollution from 80 parts per billion to 75 parts per billion. This is a reflection of the serious health effects of breathing ozone.

Know before you go!

What do DEQ's air quality forecasts mean?

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) monitors and measures air pollutants throughout Idaho. Based on these data and meteorological conditions, DEQ issues air quality alerts using a system called the Air Quality Index or AQI. Daily air quality conditions may be viewed at www.deq.idaho.gov/air/aqindex.cfm.

Category	Index Value	Level of Health Concern
Green	0-50	Good
Yellow	51-100	Moderate
Orange	101-150	Unhealthy for sensitive groups
Red	151-200	Unhealthy
Purple	201-300	Very unhealthy
Maroon	301-500	Hazardous

When air quality is good or moderate:

Enjoy the clean air and help keep it that way!

- ✓ Carpool, use public transportation, bike, or walk whenever possible.
- ✓ Avoid topping off your tank. Be careful not to spill fuel and always tighten the gas cap securely.
- ✓ Keep car, boat, and other engines tuned up according to manufacturers' specifications.
- ✓ Be sure tires are properly inflated.
- ✓ Combine errands and reduce trips.
- ✓ Limit engine idling.
- ✓ Use low-VOC or water-based paints whenever possible.
- ✓ Follow manufacturers' guidelines for use and storage of products made with solvents.

When air quality is unhealthy or hazardous:

Protect your health and air quality.

- ✓ Limit or cancel outdoor activities until conditions improve.
- ✓ Choose a cleaner commute, share a ride to work, use public transportation, or telecommute.
- ✓ Avoid using gasoline-powered lawn and garden equipment.
- ✓ Combine errands and reduce trips.
- ✓ Limit engine idling.
- ✓ Delay using household, workshop, and garden chemicals until conditions improve.

Access daily air quality conditions at www.deq.idaho.gov/air/aqindex.cfm