

Summertime Air Quality

Your Yard and You: Reducing Air Emissions

Air quality in the summertime

When the sun is out, the skies are clear, and the temperature is high, watch out for ozone pollution. Ground-level ozone is formed when air pollutants (nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds) combine in the presence of heat and sunlight. Some sources of these pollutants include motor vehicle exhaust, industrial emissions, gasoline vapors, and chemical solvents.

- Ozone in the upper atmosphere is good. Up high, it occurs naturally and helps protect us from the sun's ultraviolet rays.
- Ozone at ground level is bad. In the air we breathe, ozone is not natural and is an air pollutant that impacts public health.

High levels of ground-level ozone are most common in the summer. Ozone forms throughout the day—reaching peak levels in the late afternoon. However, there are things we can all do to help limit the formation of ozone.

My lawn mower creates air pollution?

Most people don't think of air pollution when mowing their yards or shopping for new lawn and garden tools. But, lawn mowers, leaf blowers, trimmers, and other gasoline-powered lawn equipment are large sources of air pollution.

Depending on the year, make, and model, a lawn mower can emit as much pollution in one hour as driving a car up to 200 miles.

What can I do to prevent ozone pollution from my lawn mower and yard equipment?

Follow best practices

- ✓ Use a funnel when filling lawn-equipment gasoline tanks.
- ✓ Store power equipment out of the heat and sunlight to prevent evaporation.
- ✓ Maintain equipment. Change the oil, clean or replace filters regularly, get tune-ups, maintain sharp blades, and keep underside of deck clean.
- ✓ Mow lawn late in the evening, after 7 p.m. This gives ozone-forming chemicals a chance to dissipate overnight.
- ✓ Drain extra gasoline before putting your machine away for winter. Use the excess gasoline in your car.

Purchase cleaner equipment

- ✓ Trade in your old mower for a new electric machine. Electric mowers reduce pollution by 90%.
- ✓ Try a manual lawn mower. They are inexpensive, produce no emissions, and offer great exercise.
- ✓ Consider a four-stroke engine for gas-powered machines. Four-stroke engines are 70% more efficient than two-stroke engines.



For more information, visit www.deq.idaho.gov/ozone