



Statement by the Ozone Transport Commission on the Need for Federal Action to Reduce Ozone-Forming Pollution from Mobile Sources to Protect Public Health

Ground-level ozone is formed when emissions of nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds, known as ozone precursors, react with sunlight. Ozone exposure can irritate the respiratory system, reduce lung function, aggravate asthma, damage lung lining, permanently scar lung tissue, and increase the risk of premature death from lung or heart disease. Unsafe ozone levels pose a greater risk to children because their lungs are still developing, and they face higher levels of exposure from spending more time being active and playing sports outside. The elderly are also at increased risk due to age-related changes that decrease their ability to cope with ozone exposure, leading to worsening respiratory and cardiovascular health and reduced cognitive abilities.

Established by the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments, the Ozone Transport Commission (OTC) is a multi-state organization responsible for advising the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on solutions to address the persistent ground-level ozone problem in the Ozone Transport Region (OTR), covering the District of Columbia and twelve states in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic. To achieve its mission to reduce regional ozone pollution, the OTC calls upon the EPA to control mobile source emissions that states are preempted from regulating.

As required by the Clean Air Act, EPA sets National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for ozone and other criteria pollutants to protect public health from poor air quality. Despite dramatic reductions in ozone pollution in the OTR, the New York City metropolitan area, where over 20 million people live and 65 million people visit, is in non-attainment with both the 2008 and 2015 NAAQS for ozone.

In the OTR, the mobile source sector – including cars, trucks, ships, trains, planes, lawn and garden, and farm and construction vehicles and equipment – is the greatest contributor to ground level ozone. While stationary sources of ozone precursor emissions continue to contribute to interstate air pollution in violation of the Clean Air Act's good neighbor provisions and must continue to be addressed, it is not possible for areas in the OTR to meet national health-based ozone air quality standards without deep pollution reductions from the mobile source sector.

Connecticut

Delaware

District of Columbia

Maine

Maryland

Massachusetts

New Hampshire

New Jersey

New York

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Rhode Island

Vermont

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Unlike stationary sources, mobile source emissions are largely under federal control because states are preempted from establishing emission standards for new vehicles and engines. One notable exception authorized under the Clean Air Act and utilized by many OTC members, is the right to adopt and enforce emission standards for new cars and trucks that are identical to California's standards for which an EPA waiver is granted. Although shown to be a cost-effective measure to reduce ozone-forming pollution, the House and Senate have now passed Congressional Review Act disapprovals for California's clean car and truck programs¹ and EPA has announced plans to weaken current federal emissions standards for cars and trucks.² Together, these federal actions have created significant uncertainty for the states in addressing ozone-forming pollution from cars and trucks. These actions will harm Americans of all ages, but especially children and the elderly, and undermine the principles of cooperative federalism that have underpinned the significant advances in clean air and public health achieved in the United States since the adoption of the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments.

The United States auto industry has also been a global leader in vehicle technology innovation. Support for continuing innovation will ensure that the U.S. automakers will remain globally competitive.

For these reasons, the OTC urges EPA to work with the OTC to achieve the deep reductions needed in ozone-forming emissions from mobile sources to ensure our region, and our country, truly have among the cleanest air on the planet.

Adopted by the Commission June 11, 2025

¹ U.S. EPA, EPA Hails Congressional Disapproval of Biden EPA's California EV Mandate Rule, May 22, 2025, <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-hails-congressional-disapproval-biden-epas-california-ev-mandate-rule>.

² U.S. EPA, EPA Launches Biggest Deregulatory Action in U.S. History, March 12, 2025, <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-launches-biggest-deregulatory-action-us-history>.