



**OZONE  
TRANSPORT  
COMMISSION**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Friday, May 16, 2003**

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District of Columbia

Maine

Maryland

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New Hampshire

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New York

Pennsylvania

Rhode Island

Vermont

Virginia

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## **OTC ANNOUNCES OZONE AWARENESS WEEK**

(May 16, 2003, Washington DC) - The Ozone Transport Commission (OTC) is announcing "Ozone Awareness Week." In order to increase awareness of air pollution throughout the region and its efforts to make the air safer for everyone, OTC member Mid-Atlantic and Northeast states will be kicking off the summer season with a variety of informative community events aimed at helping people avoid the dangerous health effects of ground-level ozone. Activities will take place from May 18-24, many of which will continue throughout the summer. These events are open to the public and include something for everyone. A listing of upcoming events is available at [www.sso.org/otc.oaw](http://www.sso.org/otc.oaw)

"The start of the Ozone Season is an important time of year, when we redouble our efforts to make people aware of the problem and what they can do about it" - Christopher Recchia, Executive Director of the OTC.

Ground-level ozone forms during warm weather when pollution from motor vehicles, fuels, power plants, households and industry "bakes" in the sun. Urban areas tend to have high levels of ozone pollution, but many other more rural areas are also subject to these dangers as winds can carry pollutants hundreds of miles away from their original sources.

Because ozone pollution usually forms in hot weather, anyone who spends time outdoors in the summer may be affected, particularly young children, the elderly, people with asthma or other respiratory disease, and those who work or exercise outdoors are particularly susceptible to the harmful effects of ground-level ozone. Even when ozone is present in low levels, it can trigger a variety of health problems including chest pains, coughing, nausea, throat irritation, and congestion. It can also worsen bronchitis, heart disease, emphysema, and asthma, and reduce lung capacity. Healthy people also experience difficulty in breathing when exposed to ozone pollution. Repeated exposure to ozone pollution may cause permanent damage to the lungs. According to the American Lung Association, lung disease and other breathing problems are the number one killer of babies younger than one year old. Today, more than 30 million Americans are living with chronic lung disease such as asthma, emphysema and chronic bronchitis.

"It's important for people in every state to address the ground level ozone problem, to prevent health risks for themselves as well as their neighbors who may suffer from the transport of these harmful pollutants." -Jim Brooks, Maine DEP

There are a variety of steps individuals can take to reduce pollution and keep the air clean.

- Participate in Ozone Awareness activities (see attached schedule)
- Keep your automobile well tuned and maintained.
- Carpool, use mass transit, walk, bicycle, and/or reduce driving, especially on hot summer days.
- Conserve electricity- much of the power comes from sources that emit ozone forming compounds.
- Be careful not to spill gasoline when filling up your car or gasoline-powered lawn and garden equipment.
- During the summer, fill your gas tank during the cooler evening hours.
- Make sure your car's tires are properly inflated and your wheels are aligned.
- Participate in your local utility's energy conservation programs.
- Seal containers of household cleaners, workshop chemicals and solvents, and garden chemicals to prevent volatile organic compounds (VOCs) from evaporating into the air. Dispose of them properly.

OTC is a multi-state organization whose main focus is to develop regional solutions to the ground-level ozone problem in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast region of the U.S. It is committed to finding innovative approaches that maximize public health and environmental benefits. OTC was created by Congress, and its members include: Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Virginia.

# Ozone Awareness Week

## Summary of Events in the Region

### **Delaware**

The Ozone Action Partnership of Delaware had a "Kick-off" at DuPont Hospital for Children in Wilmington on Monday May 12. State officials signed a proclamation, and announced the employer incentive free bus ride program on "code red" days.

Brochures will be distributed throughout the state to day-care providers, summer camps, 4-H groups and others that describe the dangers of ozone and how we can protect our children during the summer. Comcast Cable will run television ads on steps you can take during the ozone season.

### **District of Columbia**

The DC Air Quality Division has re-activated a link on the DC website that includes daily ozone and particulate emission forecasts. DC is also participating in ozone forecasting for the Baltimore-Washington region with the Council of Governments and the Maryland Department of Environment and is submitting ozone hourly data to EPA for the "Air Now" project.

### **Maine**

Maine will be holding an Asthma and Air Breakfast Seminar on May 30<sup>th</sup> directed towards health professionals, including asthma educators, respiratory therapists, school nurses and others who have daily contact with asthmatics. The seminar will feature two speakers; an air quality expert who will provide an overview of air quality issues in Maine, and a medical speaker who will give a summary of the most up-to-date best practices for treating acute asthma attacks. Attendees will earn 3 continuing education unit credits.

In addition to the breakfast seminar, Maine will be issuing press releases on ozone air quality issues, along with suggested steps the public can take to reduce it and minimize their personal exposure.

### **Maryland**

Bicycle commuters met at one of the region's several rally points for Bike to Work Day! Baltimore City Hall Plaza, Bel Air, and Annapolis. May 2.

Clean Air Partners launched the summer ozone season at Baltimore City Hall Plaza. Air-friendly vendors were present as well as a clean air barbeque! Baltimore City Hall Plaza. May 2.

The Clean Commute Partners were at the Towson Spring Festival in Towson, MD. May 3-4.

Coming soon\*\* Take a ride, take a drive, learn about vehicles that do not run on gasoline at the Alternative Fuel Vehicles Day! Community College of Baltimore County in Catonsville. May 28.

### **New Hampshire**

A new air monitoring station is operating at the Seacoast Science Center in Rye.

Officials will also reinstitute the Ride Free-Breathe Free program and the Air Quality Information Line. Ride Free-Breathe Free offers free transit rides to passengers when an Air Quality Action Day is declared.

In addition, NH participated in the National Bike or Walk to Work Day on May 15 and 16th.

An exhibit relating to health effects of ozone will be displayed at the state's Health Officers Association annual meeting on May 22.

### **New York**

New York will promote new gas cans and issue a grant for MTBE outreach to Delaware Valley Regional Planning.

May 20 will hold a kick-off/press event focused on forecasting and 8-hour reporting. The state is also working with Uni-vision Television to announce forecasts in Spanish and is working to begin a bilingual telephone line.

### **Pennsylvania**

Pennsylvania is offering a wide variety of events this season:

- Free rides on ozone action days
- Clean Air Expos held in York on May 6th and Lancaster on May 13th.
- Dry cleaners will distribute hanger tags on their customers' orders on Ozone Action Days. The hanger tags were developed with the help of the Ozone Action Partnership and includes basic ozone info and tips to help people prevent air pollution.
- Working with True Value Hardware stores to offer a 25% discount on new gas cans through December 31, 2003.
- Clean Mower Rebate Program - Offers \$75 toward the purchase of an electric lawnmower and \$25 toward the purchase of an electric trimmer to those who trade in their gasoline-powered yard equipment.

### Susquehanna Valley

Radio station (KISS 99.3) will have a bus ride and do a live remote with free give away. A kickoff luncheon will be held Thursday May 22 in Harrisburg. There is also a clean air expo in Harrisburg on Tuesday May 20.

### Lehigh Valley

A kickoff luncheon will be held on Wednesday May 21 at ETAC in Bethlehem. A barbeque will be held at WFMZ-TV in Allentown on June 6<sup>th</sup>.

### Southwest

A kickoff event will be held Sat. May 17. It will consist of a barbeque and a lawn mower collection program at Construction Junction in Pittsburgh.

### Southeast

A kickoff luncheon will be held Tuesday May 20 in Philadelphia. PennDOT District 6-0 will use VMS to display Ozone Action messages

**Rhode Island**

On May 7 Rhode Island officials kicked off the State's annual Ozone Alert Program, which provides free public transportation on "Ozone Alert Days." An event was held adjacent to the air quality monitoring station in East Providence. Students in the fourth grade from the nearby Myron Francis Elementary School attended. The students and their teachers presented a list of 26 names to be used for each Ozone Alert Day called during the summer (much in the same way the National Weather Service names hurricanes). The students also displayed their drawings representing each of the names.

**Regional Events**

EPA Region I, will announce the availability of the air quality forecast maps and a smog alert program.

EPA Region III will kick off Ozone Action Days on May 20<sup>th</sup>. Air Protection Division Director and Deputy will be in attendance and delivering remarks. If resources permit, they will be visiting Senior Citizen Centers to deliver the message.