

June 27, 2012

News Release

For Immediate Release

Air Quality Negatively Affected by Heat

Springfield's Air Quality forecast is listed as **Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups (USG)** in the Orange Level range Wednesday through Sunday.

Under an Orange Level Alert, the following groups should limit prolonged outdoor exertion:

- People with lung disease, such as asthma
- Children and older adults
- People who are active outdoors

Ground level ozone is formed when air pollutants react chemically in the presence of sunlight. The combination of high temperatures, low winds, and sunlight raises the level of ozone. Local pollutant sources are primarily mobile sources, such as automobiles and other gas-powered engines.

"Reducing use of automobiles during periods of high-ozone production can help reduce the levels. Activities such as carpooling, using mass transit and trip chaining (organizing errands to reduce unnecessary miles traveled) are encouraged," explains Barbara Lucks, interim sustainability officer, City of Springfield Department of Environmental Services.

Ground-level ozone can affect human health in the following ways:

Irritation to respiratory system: Presented as a cough, irritation or soreness in the throat, chest tightness or pain when taking a deep breath.

Reduced lung function: Making it more difficult to breath as deeply and vigorously as usual, especially when exercising, possibly presented as breathing feeling uncomfortable and more rapid and shallow than usual.

Inflammation and damage to cells that line the lungs: Within a few days, the damaged cells are replaced and the old cells are shed. This makes lungs more susceptible to infection.

Aggravating asthma and other lung diseases such as emphysema and chronic bronchitis: Asthma symptoms may require a doctor's attention or the use of medication. People with asthma are advised to have an asthma action plan and follow it carefully when ozone levels are unhealthy.

Causing permanent lung damage: Short-term ozone damage to children's developing lungs may lead to reduced lung function in adulthood. In adults, ozone exposure may accelerate the natural decline in lung function that occurs with age.

Tips for avoiding unhealthy exposure to ozone include:

- Reduce the time you are active outdoors
- Schedule the activity for the morning or evening hours when ozone levels are usually lower.
- Avoid intense activities such as playing basketball or soccer outdoors chopping wood, heavy manual labor and vigorous running, cycling or hiking.

More information is available in the ["Ozone and Your Health" brochure](#) (pdf) or at www.showmecleanair.com.

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