EPA's new federal ozone standards: What does this mean for Oregon?

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Oregon Communities Will Likely Continue To Meet Ozone Standards

Wednesday's tightening of the federal ozone standard may cause many communities to scramble for new pollution controls or stricter regulations. But thanks to decades' old ozone reduction plans, Oregon's communities, even those of primary concern for ozone already meet the new standards.

There are four areas of primary concern for ground level ozone (smog) in Oregon: Portland, Eugene, Salem and Medford.

In 1977-78 Oregon developed ozone reduction plans for all four areas. In the 1990s only Portland and Salem remained out of compliance with the ozone standard. To reverse this trend, DEQ developed and implemented a suite of emission reduction strategies in 1996 such as requiring fume capturing gas nozzles at gas stations in Portland, vehicle inspection and maintenance programs in Portland and Medford, and emission standards for industrial sources that brought these areas into compliance with the current standard. These strategies remain very effective today and will help limit ozone forming emissions.

â€œOzone (or smog) increases on hot summer days, especially when winds are stagnant, and we do experience some high levels in the summer.â€• says David Collier DEQ Air Quality Program manager. â€œBut weâ€™re confident that the strategies we have in place will allow us to continue to meet the federal health standard for ozone in all Oregon communities. However, we also want to look for new ways to continue reducing smog forming emissions.â€•

Currently, DEQ issues air pollution advisories when ozone and other types of pollution reach potentially unsafe levels. The advisory system provides an early warning for people most sensitive to air pollution including children, the elderly and people who suffer from asthma or other types of respiratory ailments. In addition, because the largest sources of air pollution are the combined day-to-day activities of each of us, air pollution advisories offer individual actions people can take to help reduce pollution. These include:

Reduce vehicle idling. Drive less. Use a bike or walk. Carpool, take the bus, or use other public transportation. Refuel vehicles in the cooler evening hours and avoid spilling gasoline Telecommute or teleconference. Limit use of gasoline-powered mowers and garden equipment. Avoid using spray pesticides. Use manual tools or electric engines that don't require gasoline. Avoid using hair spray, air freshener, solvents and oil based paint. These contain volatile organic compounds (VOCs) which are smog-forming chemicals. Use natural gas or propane barbecues, or use electric charcoal lighters or chimney starters instead of charcoal lighter fluids. Future strategies will likely help reduce ozone

Even though Portland and other cities in Oregon may be below the new standard, new work in the areas of air toxics and greenhouse gases may provide an additional measure of protection and prevention and reduce pollutants that contribute to smog.

Recently, DEQ named the Portland-Metro area as the stateâ€™s first air toxics geographic area making the reduction of toxic air pollutants a top priority. Later this year an advisory committee will be assembled representing a broad coalition of local business, government and citizen groups to determine specific actions the area can take to reduce air toxics. Some actions to reduce air toxics could also reduce smog forming emissions.

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