

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ozone Season Begins in Dane County

Healthy Air Employers Are Taking Steps to Prevent Air Pollution and Protect Employee Health

Hot summer weather has returned and so has ozone season. For the sixth consecutive year, the Dane County Clean Air Coalition (DCCAC) will call a *Clean Air Action Day* for ozone when air pollution is forecast to reach unhealthy levels for ground-level ozone.

Dane County was *not* included in the air quality watch for today issued by DNR for sixteen counties.

"Clean Air Action Days are a voluntary way for government agencies, businesses and citizens in Dane County to do their share for cleaner air," said Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk. "As Dane County continues to grow, preventive actions must be taken to ensure that our air remains healthy into the future."

A *Clean Air Action Day* is triggered when the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) meteorologists notify the DCCAC that an ozone-related air quality watch has been called because weather conditions may produce unhealthy levels of ozone on the following day.

"Madison and Dane County are doing more than ever to combat air pollution, and air quality is improving as a result," Mayor Dave Cieslewicz said. "Clean Air Action Days are something we can all take part in to promote clean air and protect the health of our citizens."

The DCCAC's recently launched *Healthy Air Employer Network* (www.healthyairdane.org) offers Dane County employers a new opportunity to promote clean air actions that reduce their emissions of ozone and other air pollutants on *Clean Air Action Days*, as well as throughout the year.

"We can help our economy by working together for healthy air," said Jennifer Alexander, President of the Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce. "Air pollution hurts our economy. If federal air pollution standards are exceeded here in Dane County, businesses will be burdened by mandatory regulations to reduce air pollution costing our citizens and our businesses millions of dollars each year. The Healthy Air Employer Network provides its member businesses with the tools needed to help improve air quality. We encourage businesses to join the Healthy Air Employer Network. Healthy air helps Dane County continue to be a great place to live, work, play and do business."

The *Healthy Air Employer Network* uses a variety of measures such as promoting clean commute alternatives to their employees and retooling operations and maintenance practices to reduce emissions that contribute to air pollution. It also provides results-oriented information on what works in Dane County, so businesses can effectively motivate their employees to try alternative commuting methods such as

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carpooling, vanpooling, riding the bus or biking to work, as well as implementing policies that reduce emissions of air pollutants from their operational and maintenance practices.

The *Healthy Air Employer Network* is funded by a grant from the UW School of Medicine and Public Health Partnership Fund for a Healthy Future. Dane County employers can sign up to become a member of the *Healthy Air Employer Network* at www.healthyairedane.org.

“We’ve been making progress in improving the quality of the air we breathe in Dane County, but the recent passage of more stringent federal air pollutant standards means that we need to continue to be vigilant and step up our efforts to promote clean air and protect public health,” said Lisa MacKinnon, DCCAC Project Coordinator. “The Clean Air Coalition offers area businesses, institutions, local governments and residents assistance and tools, such as *the Healthy Air Employer Network*, to help them do that.”

Why Clean Air Action Days for Ozone?

A *Clean Air Action Day* for ozone lets people know that ground-level ozone could reach an unhealthy level especially for children, older adults, people with asthma and adults engaged in vigorous outdoor activities. *Clean Air Action Days* also remind people of simple actions they can take to improve the air we all breathe.

What is Ozone?

Ozone in the upper atmosphere is a good thing, protecting the earth from the sun’s harmful ultraviolet rays. But ozone found close to the earth’s surface, or ground-level ozone, is a key component of smog and a harmful pollutant (i.e., ozone is “good up high, but bad nearby.”).

Clean Air Action Days occur on hot days with lots of sun and little or no wind when pollutants (volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and nitrogen oxides (NOx)) “cook” in the hot sunlight to form ground-level ozone. The major sources of VOCs and NOx include:

- Cars, trucks and buses
- Gasoline storage, transfer and refueling
- Large utility and industrial facilities
- Industrial use of solvents and degreasing agents
- Off-road engines such as construction equipment, aircraft, locomotives, boats and lawn & garden equipment

What You Can Do to Reduce Ozone

During a *Clean Air Action Day*, government agencies, businesses and citizens will be asked to do their share for cleaner air and the health of local residents by engaging in ozone-reducing activities. Because half of all Dane County’s ozone-forming pollutants come from everyday activities like driving a car, refueling vehicles, or mowing the lawn, area residents can play an important role in reducing emissions. Actions that citizens can take on a *Clean Air Action Day* to reduce the likelihood of unhealthy ozone formation include:

- Ride the Metro Transit bus to work or other destinations:
See <http://www.cityofmadison.com/metro/> or call 266-4466 for trip planning assistance.
- Join a car/vanpool: See <http://www.ci.madison.wi.us/rideshare/>

- Don't let your vehicle idle. It gets 0 MPG!
- Combine errands and reduce trips
- Reschedule or delay lawn mowing using gas-powered equipment until after 6 p.m.
- Refuel your vehicle after dusk if possible
- Conserve energy at home and work by reducing air conditioning and turning off unnecessary lighting.

DCCAC member organizations will activate their *Clean Air Action Day* response plans to help protect air quality and help ensure that Dane County continues to comply with all federal air quality standards. *Clean Air Action Day* response plans include alerting all employees via e-mail, limiting vehicle idling and avoiding refueling fleet vehicles until after 6 p.m., reducing or postponing mowing and painting whenever possible and conserving energy by reducing air conditioning and lighting.

For more information on *Clean Air Action Days*, visit the Dane County Clean Air Coalition website at www.healthyairedane.org. Air Quality Watches and Advisories will be posted on the main DNR internet page, <http://dnr.wi.gov/>, as soon as they are issued. The Air Quality Hotline is 1-866-DAILY AIR (1-866-324-5924) and will be updated when watches or advisories are issued. To sign up for the DNR listserv and receive watches or advisories by e-mail, go to <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/aw/air/health/listserv.html>.

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