

# What is **OZONE,** anyway?



**Ground level ozone** is a kind of **air pollution**. Certain gases that come **from our cars, solvents, smokestacks, and other fairly common sources** combine with **heat and sunlight** to create **ozone**. It doesn't help much that **our part of the state is like a big bowl** so these gases can't escape and just bake all afternoon.

**Our muggy, hot Alabama summers are perfect ozone weather.**

## Okay, so why should I care?



**Breathing ozone is really bad for your health** --- it's a lot like getting a sunburn on your lungs. And, **once the damage is done, it can't be fixed**. The long term result is less lung capacity, meaning it will get harder and harder to breathe over time. The people **at highest risk** are:

- ★ **our kids**
- ★ **older folks**
- ★ **friends and family who have breathing problems from conditions like asthma**

But the truth is **even a perfectly healthy person can be harmed by ozone**.

Because it's unhealthy, the government regulates ozone and puts **restrictions** on communities that **don't fix their problem**. We **have already lost billions of dollars in new industry** and could one day lose highway funds.

# Well, what can one person do?

You can do a lot. If there is any good news on ozone, it's that **we can fix our ozone problem**. In fact, most of the measures we take now are voluntary, meaning **we choose what to do and when to do it**. But we've got to act now or the choice may be taken out of our hands.



On **OZONE ALERT** days, when the conditions are right for ozone to form, **do your share for cleaner air** and follow these simple tips ...

## Watch the news for Ozone Alert forecasts

- ★ **If you must drive during the day, refuel your car after 6 PM and combine errands**
- ★ **Keep your car well tuned-up and watch for the CHECK ENGINE light**
- ★ **Wait until after 6 PM to mow your grass or use gas-powered lawn equipment – better yet, put it off until the Ozone Alert is over**
- ★ **Bike, walk or ride public transit when possible**
- ★ **Carpool or vanpool to work – for info, call *CommuteSmart* at 205/251-8631**
- ★ **Reduce the use of aerosol products, oil-based paints, and solvents**
- ★ **Keep your thermostat at 78° to conserve energy**



**For more information,  
call the Jefferson County  
Department of Environmental  
Protection at 205/325-8712**