

AirWaves Fact Sheet

the pollutants | where they come from | how they affect us

Introduction

Vehicles emissions are responsible for the majority of air pollution in the metropolitan-Denver region. Cars contribute to two main pollutants – ground-level ozone and carbon monoxide. In 2007 the region was designated “non-attainment” - out of compliance with federal health-based standards for ozone pollution - by the federal Environmental Protection Agency. With this new designation it is more important than ever that we educate citizens about the health impacts of harmful emissions and the ways in which all people can help take care of the air. Please feel free to use the following information in your radio public service announcement as well as the resources provided below.

refuel in the evening | keep vehicle well maintained | stop at the pump after refueling

Ozone

Ground-level ozone pollution is formed when emissions from everyday sources combine with other pollutants and cook in the heat and sunlight. Sources of such emissions include local industry, gasoline-powered vehicles and lawn equipment; and household paints, stains and solvents.

At ground level, ozone pollution is harmful to all of us, especially the young and elderly. Ozone can also trigger attacks and symptoms in individuals with pre-existing health conditions such as asthma or other respiratory infections. High levels of ozone pollution often affect healthy people who work or exercise outdoors and can cause breathing difficulties, eye irritation and reduced resistance to lung infections and colds with exposure for prolonged periods.

Carbon Monoxide

get regular oil changes | keep air filter clean | get regularly scheduled emissions test

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas that is formed from the incomplete burning of fuel (combustion). It is emitted directly into the air from vehicle exhaust pipes and typically occurs when vehicles are first started up or when they are not started properly. The altitude here in the Denver region can also impact this process because the air is thinner and does not allow for the proper amount of oxygen needed for combustion.

Carbon monoxide enters the lungs and inhibits the body’s ability to transport oxygen to organs and tissues. It can affect healthy individuals. However, the young, elderly, and those with pre-existing health conditions like heart disease are particularly sensitive.

Resources

OzoneAware.org | AirCareColorado.com | raqc.org