Years ago, the City of Cincinnati realized the hazards of air pollution and assisted each City department in developing a Smog Alert action plan. These plans suggest voluntary actions to reduce pollution on Smog Alert days.

"As the City's core, it is vital for us to lead by example," says Cincinnati Health Department's Senior Environmental Safety Specialist, Kathy Clayton, regarding the City's role in environmental education. "With the growing support of large area employers, our impact will multiply."

For years, the acting City Manager has kicked off smog season with a letter to all departments reiterating the importance of pollution reduction. Departments are also notified when an alert is issued. Divisions, such as the Park District, often reschedule mowing and painting to avoid the crucial hours of smog formation from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Office employees are asked to conserve electricity, turn up the thermostat and use e-mail rather than coping or faxing.

Follow the City's example and do your share for cleaner air.

Smog! It's not just here in the sweltering summer months - though that is a common misconception. The main culprits of smog are two separate types of pollution: ozone and particulate matter (PM). Ozone is caused by emissions from automobiles, smokestacks, lawn mowers, and other chemicals in the presence of sunlight. Particulate matter, such as dust, soot and ash, comes from a variety of sources including wood burning, diesel and gasoline engines, factories, and power plants, most of which are present year-round.

Think you're coming down with the flu? It might not be the bug at all - it could be the result of air pollution. PM can actually cause flu-like symptoms, such as aggravating existing respiratory and cardiovascular problems, and irritating the eyes, nose and throat. It doesn't take long to feel the effects of air pollution - adverse health effects have been associated with exposures to PM as short as one day.

Similar to smog levels during summertime, the weather influences the levels of PM in the fall and winter air as well. Colder temperatures result in more wood burning, which increases particulate levels. Dry weather and lack of wind or precipitation can leave the PM suspended in the air for a longer period of time, causing potential health problems.

The Hamilton County Department of Environmental Services, Air Quality Management Division, measures the levels of PM in the air for Southwestern Ohio. This information is placed in the Air Quality Index (AQI), which is provided to the local media. To learn more about PM and other air quality issues, please visit www.hcdoes.org or call (513) 946-7777.

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ROC Meeting

Save the Date!

Thursday, May 20 at 2 p.m.
At OKI Regional Council of Governments
720 E. Pete Rose Way
Discussion will include national, regional and local perspectives on the new 8-hour ozone designation.

The Regional Ozone Coalition (ROC) is a voluntary organization of local governments, organizations and businesses committed to reducing smog in Boone, Butler, Campbell, Clermont, Hamilton, Kenton and Warren counties.
Clean Air Rules are a Help, Not a Hindrance

The new 8-hour ozone standard designations, part of the Clean Air Rules of 2004, were issued by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on April 15. According to the EPA, areas in 31 states do not meet new health standards for ground-level ozone. Many people are worried about how their lives and wallets will be impacted, but the bottom line is that cleaner air equals improved quality of life.

The Greater Cincinnati region is categorized as "basic" nonattainment. State implementation plans (SIPs) detailing how areas plan to lower emissions must be submitted to EPA within three years, and the new standards must be met by 2009.

The Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI) is working collaboratively with the Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky Chambers of Commerce, the Regional Ozone Coalition and other groups, to evaluate locally-preferred options to reduce emissions.

"We have two choices - sit back and let the federal government tell us what to do or engage as a region and help develop solutions that work for our region," OKI Executive Director Mark Policinski said. OKI chose the latter approach.

National initiatives are also being taken to reduce pollution across state lines. For more information, please visit www.epa.gov. For local air quality information, visit www.doyourshare.org or call 1-800-621-SMOG.

Seeing is Believing
Making Air Visible

Seeing is believing, so we are challenging all amateur photographers to join our effort in Making Air Visible. The Hamilton County Department of Environmental Services' (HCDOES) 2004 Air Quality Photography Contest has officially begun. Capture air on film from now until July 30!

The contest is split into three categories. Participants should illustrate the need for clean air in the Air Pollution category; photograph a clear day or people doing their share for cleaner air in the Clean Air category; or be imaginative and capture air on film in the final category, Making Air Visible.

Each category will have a junior (age 18 and below) and an adult winner. Judges will select the winning entries in August. The winners will be honored at the Air Quality Policy Advisory Meeting.

For an entry form, rules or more information, please call Lynn White at 513-946-7777 or visit www.hcdoes.org.

Smog season is in full swing. Many opportunities and challenges lie ahead due to the new air quality standards. The EPA's 8-hour ozone and PM2.5 standard means we must strive to continue to improve our air quality throughout Greater Cincinnati.

There's also good news. This year marks a momentous milestone for the ROC - our 10th anniversary. Over the past decade, what started as a vision, has become an evolving reality.

Through public and private outreach and the extremely successful 'Do Your Share for Cleaner Air' campaign, our message has been heard. Events ranging from gas cap replacements to the Clean Air A-Thon have helped educate Tri-state residents on how they can positively impact the environment.

Outreach is our most powerful tool. We all need to do our share in building awareness. By spreading the word, we can make a difference. Thank you for your commitment and support.

Rick Geise, 2004 ROC Chair
Griffin Industries, Inc.

Cleaner Horizons is brought to you by Kate Barnett, OKI Intern, and Amy Miller, HCDOES Public Affairs Intern.

ROC Links
Regional Ozone Coalition
www.doyourshare.org

Hamilton County Department of Environmental Services
www.hcdoes.org

Griffin Industries
www.griffinind.com

Metro
www.sorta.com

TANK
www.tankbus.org

Midwest Haze Cam
www.mwhazecam.net/cincinnati.html

Environmental Protection Agency
www.epa.gov