

News from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services



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State Declares Air Quality Action Day *Unhealthy Air Pollution Levels Predicted for Tomorrow*

Concord, NH -- Air pollution concentrations are expected to reach unhealthy levels in Hillsborough and Rockingham Counties on Friday, July 18. State officials are calling for an Air Quality Action Day and advise sensitive individuals in these areas to take precautions to protect their health by limiting prolonged or heavy exertion. Sensitive individuals include children and older adults, anyone with heart or lung disease such as asthma, emphysema, and bronchitis, and people who are active outdoors. Even healthy individuals may experience mild health effects and should consider limiting strenuous or prolonged activities.

The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) expects concentrations of ground-level ozone, the main component of smog, to be unhealthy for sensitive individuals in the above-mentioned regions. In addition, concentrations of fine particle pollution are also expected to approach unhealthy levels in these same areas. The combination of the two pollutants may intensify health effects.

The expected unhealthy air quality is due to light winds transporting pollution into New Hampshire from surrounding areas under the conditions of sunny skies and high temperatures. DES will continue to monitor air pollution levels over the next few days and will notify the public if unhealthy levels are expected to persist.

Symptoms of ozone exposure include coughing, wheezing, chest tightness or pain when inhaling deeply, and shortness of breath. Symptoms of particle pollution exposure for people with heart disease may include chest pain, palpitations, shortness of breath, and fatigue. People with existing lung diseases may not be able to breathe as deeply or vigorously as normal and may experience symptoms such as coughing and shortness of breath. The severity of the health effects increases as ozone and fine particle concentrations increase. In addition to harmful health effects, fine particle pollution may create hazy conditions that reduce visibility.

In an effort to better protect public health, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency tightened the ozone standard this year. As a result, DES expects to see an increase in Air Quality Action Days. However, this does not mean air quality in New Hampshire is getting worse. The new standard simply extends health protection to a greater population.

For further information, contact DES at (603) 271-1370. For air quality forecasts and current air pollution levels in New Hampshire, call 1-800-935-SMOG or visit the DES website at www.airquality.nh.gov.

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