

ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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ARD-16

2020

Air Quality Action Days

Did you know that New Hampshire typically has several days each year when the air is unhealthy for sensitive groups (USG) to breathe? The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services forecasts the air quality every day and when levels are expected to reach USG or higher, an Air Quality Action Day is declared.

Hot weather may be great for summertime activities, but it can also contribute to poor outdoor air quality in New Hampshire. During a typical summer, New Hampshire experiences as many as nine days when the air is unhealthy for sensitive groups due to high concentrations of ground-level ozone, commonly referred to as "summertime smog," and/or fine particle pollution. During the cold winter months, wood smoke from increased residential heating can contribute to higher levels of fine particle pollution. Ground-level ozone is known to be highest during the summer months, whereas fine particles can reach higher-than-average levels at any time throughout the year.

- **Ground-level ozone**, or summertime smog, is formed when pollutants (nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds) react chemically in the presence of sunlight and heat. Since ground-level ozone is a summertime pollutant, air quality forecasts for ozone are provided from April through September.
- **Fine Particle Pollution** consists of both solid and liquid particles that are less than 2.5 microns in diameter (one micron is one millionth of a meter). Exposure to particle pollution is associated with numerous serious health effects. Air quality forecasts for particle pollution are provided year-round.

Air Quality Guide for Ozone and Particle Pollution

Air Quality Descriptor	Populations Affected & Recommended Actions	
	Ozone	Particle Pollution (fine particles)
GOOD	No health impacts expected in this range.	No health impacts expected in this range.
MODERATE	Unusually sensitive people* should consider limiting prolonged outdoor exertion.	Unusually sensitive people* should consider limiting prolonged exertion.

UNHEALTHY FOR SENSITIVE GROUPS	Active children and adults, and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma, should limit prolonged outdoor exertion.	People with heart or lung disease, older adults, and children should reduce prolonged or heavy exertion.
UNHEALTHY	Active children and adults, and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma, should avoid prolonged outdoor exertion; everyone else, especially children, should limit prolonged outdoor exertion.	People with heart or lung disease, older adults, and children should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion. Everyone else should reduce prolonged or heavy exertion.
VERY UNHEALTHY	Active children and adults, and people with respiratory disease, such as asthma, should avoid all outdoor exertion. Everyone else, especially children, should limit outdoor exertion.	People with heart or lung disease, older adults, and children should avoid all physical activity outdoors. Everyone else should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion.
HAZARDOUS	Everyone should avoid all outdoor exertion.	Everyone should avoid all physical activity outdoors; people with respiratory or heart disease, the elderly and children should remain indoors and keep activity levels low.