



EarthWatch Rhode Island



Topic: Prepare for Bad Air! How DEM Determines an Ozone Alert Day

Air Date: July 9, 2006;

Background:

Over the past 10 years, our air quality has improved. But ground level ozone, or smog, is still Rhode Island's biggest air pollution problem. Where does it come from? Exhaust from power plants, factories, automobiles and other products we use every day combine in the atmosphere and react to sunlight and high temperatures. High levels of ozone can cause coughing, chest pain, throat irritation, asthma attacks and other lung damage. Children, the elderly and people with asthma or other respiratory diseases are at the most risk from ozone.

The DEM is responsible for forecasting **Ozone Alert Days** when ozone levels and air quality reach unhealthy levels.

DEM monitors ozone levels at three air monitors throughout Rhode Island - located in Narragansett, Richmond and East Providence. The monitors automatically transmit ozone levels hourly to the DEM Air Quality Polling computer station in Providence. At that point, DEM Senior Air Quality Specialist Lenny Giuliano, a trained meteorologist, reviews the ozone data in combination with regional ozone forecasts, area weather forecasts and air trajectory maps. At 2 pm

each day, Lenny confers with EPA and colleagues from the six New England states and New York and New Jersey on a conference call to discuss the regional ozone outlook.



The air monitoring station in East Providence is one of three that transmit ozone levels hourly to DEM.

If, after reviewing data and consulting with other Northeast states, conditions are favorable for unhealthy ozone, Lenny declares an Ozone Alert. The Department alerts the public through the local media. The Department also notifies RIPTA, which provides free bus transportation on Ozone Alert Days.

In addition to monitoring ozone pollution and alerting the public, DEM works to reduce the ozone forming pollutants by regulating and inspecting some industries to ensure that they are using effective pollution control technology and by developing programs to reduce emissions from automobiles.

On **Ozone Alert Days**, Channel 10 viewers can help by following the tips below:

- **Drive Less.** Ride RIPTA busses for *FREE* (all routes, except special services such as beach bus)! Share a ride with a friend. Combine errands into one trip.
- **Conserve electricity.** Turn off lights, appliances, fans, computers, etc. when not in use. Raise the temperature settings on your air conditioner slightly.
- **Avoid fueling your car.** If you need to, refuel after dark.
- **Limit use of lawn equipment.** If necessary, mow after 6:00 p.m.
- **Take it easy!** Avoid strenuous outdoor activities during the late afternoon and drink plenty of water.

Interviews:

- Michael Sullivan, Director, DEM
- Lenny Giuliano, Senior Air Quality Specialist

Link to more information:

- DEM Homepage: www.dem.ri.gov, Timely Topics, Air Quality Forecast
- EPA's Web Page: <http://www.epa.gov/>, click on Ozone.



Channel 10 Cameraman Steve Marks prepares DEM's Lenny Giuliano for an interview with reporter Dylan Dryer.