



# Why is Ozone Important?

High ozone levels may cause the region to exceed the national ozone limits set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Exceeding the ozone limits would result in a “Non-Attainment” designation and could result in increased regulations and costs – in millions of dollars – to businesses and the community.

Increased regulations can include:

- More costly summer gasoline specifically designed to reduce ozone-forming emissions;
- More stringent and expensive control equipment for industry;
- A costly and inconvenient new vehicle inspection and maintenance program;
- Reduced speed limits on highways and expressways in the metropolitan area;
- Increased energy costs;
- Loss of industry and economic development in and around the area; and;
- Loss of federal highway and transit funding.

In addition to financial impacts, high ozone levels present other risks. Breathing ground-level ozone can result in a number of health effects that are observed in segments of the population.

Some of these effects can include:

- Induction of respiratory symptoms
  - Coughing;
  - Throat irritation;
  - Pain, burning, or discomfort in chest when taking a deep breath; and
  - Chest tightness, wheezing, or shortness of breath.
- Decrease in lung function;
- Inflammation of airways;
- Increased asthma attacks; and
- Increased hospital admissions.