

Forecast causes concern for air quality

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ST. LOUIS - With a string of extremely hot, humid and sunny days set to hover over the area this week, the Clean Air Partnership is encouraging area residents to keep an eye on the daily air quality forecast, too, and do their part to help reduce emissions in the region.

“Extended weather patterns featuring sun, extreme heat and high humidity are synonymous with the development of poor air quality conditions,” said Susannah Fuchs, director of clean air for the American Lung Association and the spokesperson for the Clean Air Partnership. “This is because sunlight and warm temperatures speed up the formation of ground-level ozone. Since we can’t control the weather factors that lead to ozone formation, it’s critical for all of us to take steps to reduce emissions when temperatures are in the ranges we’re seeing this week.”

With transportation having the most profound impact on air quality, making the choice to drive less is an easy way to help reduce the emissions that lead to poor air quality. Using transit, carpooling and vanpooling, combining errands into a single trip, telecommuting and walking and biking more to get around town help take cars off area roads and the related emissions out of our air.

Additional actions suggested by the Clean Air Partnership to help decrease emission levels in the coming days include:

- Reducing time spent on the road by postponing or combining trips;
- Planning routes to avoid idling in traffic tie-ups and construction zones;
- Brown-bagging lunch instead of making short trips to local restaurants or idling in drive-thrus;
- Refraining from refueling vehicles during the heat of the day, waiting three seconds before removing the nozzle after filling up, and never topping off the tank;
- Using gas-powered mowers only before 10 a.m. and after 7 p.m.; and
- Using pre-treated briquettes or chimney starter instead of lighter fluid to light barbeque grills.

After a couple of orange day forecasts already this week, Fuchs is also reminding area residents of the health implications of those poor air quality conditions. She cautions that those with lung disease, kids and seniors should reduce prolonged or heavy outdoor exertion when the ozone levels are in that range.

“The good news is, the simple modifications we’re suggestion to people’s daily routine can go a long way towards getting our air quality back to healthy levels and ensuring that area residents can breathe easier as the current heat wave persists,” noted Fuchs.