**Ozone Alert Days**

On June 6, I got my first Ozone Action Day notification of the year. I don’t know why it caught me off guard, but it did. I guess I was expecting everyone to still be home sheltering in place, but now that the pandemic is more under control, the temperature is up and more people are on the road, more ozone is getting trapped down here where people live. Ozone is fine up in the stratosphere, but down here on the ground it causes all sorts of health issues from asthma attacks to death for those who have a hard time breathing already. It can also cause cardiovascular harm and may cause harm to the nervous system. ([www.lung.org](http://www.lung.org))

It’s not just people who are sensitive to ozone, but the environment is as well. Quaking Aspen and Ponderosa Pine are sensitive to ozone, which stunts their growth. Ozone also causes a loss in species diversity, decreases habitat quality, and negatively impacts water and nutrient cycles.

The essential raw ingredients for ozone are nitrogen oxides (NOx) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). They are produced primarily when fossil fuels like gasoline, oil or coal are burned or when some chemicals, like solvents, evaporate. NOx is emitted from power plants, motor vehicles and other sources of high-heat combustion. VOCs are emitted from motor vehicles, chemical plants, refineries, factories, gas stations, paint and other sources. When found in the proper conditions with sunlight, ozone is produced. An action day is called when the ozone level is determined to be above 75ppm. (EPA.org)

We love our sunny days in Colorado, but they actually contribute to our ozone levels. To help cut down on the ground level ozone, there are simple things you can do - Carpool, limit or combine your car trips, take a bicycle or walk, don’t let your car idle, don’t fuel up or mow until the evening, work from home on high ozone days.

When a lot of people do little actions, it really adds up. How might your congregation promote alternatives to driving on Ozone Action Days? Share your ideas with the Creation Care Team at rmscreationcareteam@gmail.com or on FaceBook at Rocky Mountain Synod Creation Care Team.

*Creator God, who set the stars in their places and directs the course of the planets; who robed this earth with a thin garment of air, making it a haven of beauty and life; who breathed into each of us the breath of life: We thank you for the gift of air. Create in us such a sense of wonder and delight in this and in all your gifts that we receive them with gratitude, care for them with love, and generously share them with all your creatures, to the honor and glory of your holy name.* ***Amen.***

Blessings, Pr. Alena Lamirato*, RMS Creation Care Team*