

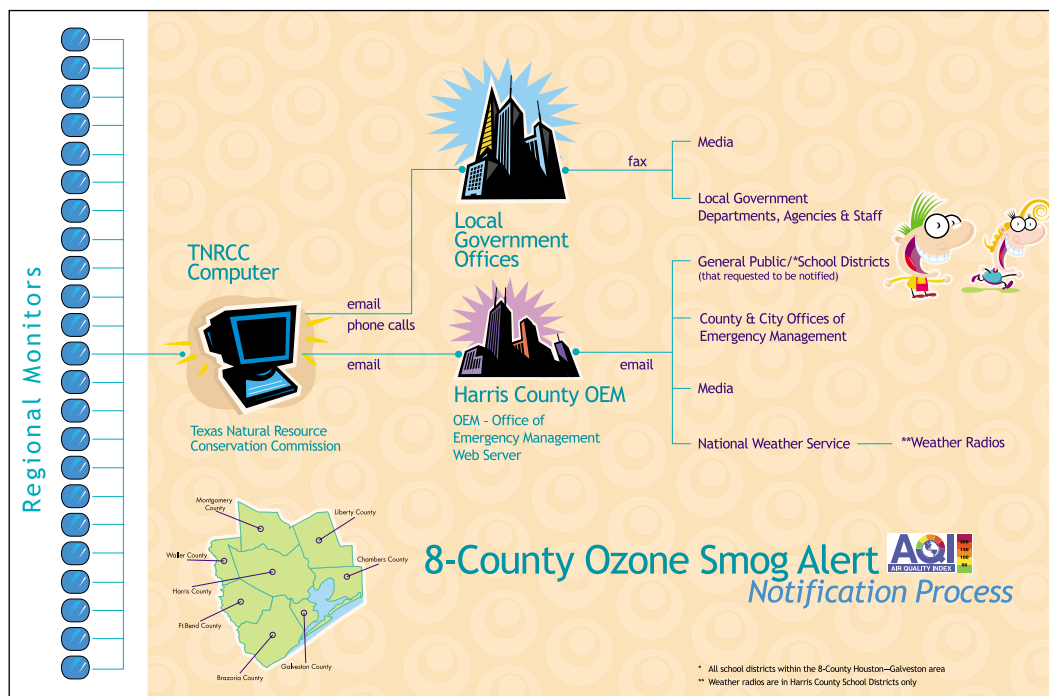
CLEAN AIR QUARTERLY

Spring 2001

New and Improved Ozone Reporting Online

Ozone alert notifications are once again available through electronic mail as the Houston-Galveston eight-county region kicks off the 2001 ozone season. This year, the Harris County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) has streamlined the e-mail messaging system to better suit and serve area residents. The system provides ozone watch and warning notices from March through November.

Notices are based on the U.S. EPA's color-coded Air Quality Index (AQI), which describes the severity of ozone pollution and provides health guidelines for outdoor activity.



The illustration above describes the 8-county region smog alert notification process. The ozone notification warnings originate at Harris County Office Of Emergency Management (OEM) and go out to the public, schools, county/city offices, media, and the National Weather Service.

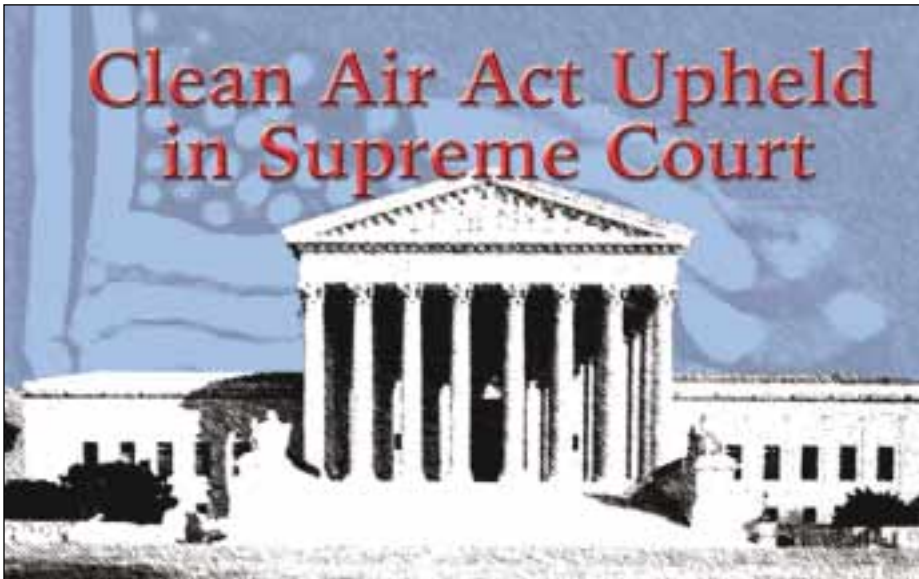


Download Andy Airedale
www.cleanairaction.org

The system still provides ozone watch notices when the TNRCC predicts high ozone levels for the eight-county nonattainment area. However, there is a significant change in the procedure for receiving ozone warnings. This year, subscribers can select which ozone monitors that they wish to receive alerts from in the Houston-Galveston area. A subscriber can receive air pollution warnings from one or more monitors, or from all 25 monitors in the region. HCOEM recommends selecting the two or

three monitors nearest a location as a backup in case a single monitor goes off-line.

All subscribers must **re-register** with the Harris County OEM, regardless of one's choice of monitoring sites. To register or re-register to receive ozone watch and warning notices, visit www.hcoem.org then click on "New and Improved Ozone Reporting," and fill out the online form. Last year, over a thousand schools, businesses and residents registered for the ozone watches and warnings.



In February the United States Supreme Court unanimously upheld tougher clean air standards adopted by the Clinton administration in 1997. The case dealt with the new standards for two pollutants: ground-level ozone, also known as smog, and particulate matter, more commonly known as soot. The court ruled 9-0 that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) must consider only public health and safety and not engage in cost-benefit analysis.

The Clean Air Act, signed in 1970, requires the EPA to review all its air standards every five years to make sure that they reflect the latest and best scientific evidence. Revisions made to the Act in 1990 classified U.S. cities according to how much they violated the ozone standard. Based on the severity of these violations, cities were given different deadlines to meet the national ambient air quality standards. However, in 1997, the EPA mandated a new, stricter 8-hour standard which has sparked controversy. Under this new standard, many new cities, such as Austin and San Antonio, would now fall out of attainment. Industry in these cities would face substantial costs in retrofitting their factories, plants and buildings to emit less pollutants.

While the court upheld the EPA's authority to issue the new ozone standard, the court also sent the

standard back to the agency for a new implementation plan. Revising the plan to account for two provisions in the Act may cause further delays in implementing the new standards. The Houston-Galveston area will not be affected by the delay of this rule, as the area does not meet the current 1-hour standard. In 2000, the eight-county area violated this federal standard 44 days.

EPA Moves Forward with Stricter Diesel-Sulfur Rule

Only one day after the Supreme Court endorsed the EPA's authority to interpret the Clean Air Act, the EPA triumphed again in clean air legislation. The EPA Administrator Christie Whitman directed the agency to move forward with a tougher diesel-sulfate rule. The rule, adopted by the Clinton administration in its last days, requires heavy-duty trucks and buses to run 95 percent cleaner by model year 2007.

The rule requires a 97 percent reduction in the sulfur content of highway diesel fuel from its current level of 500 parts per million (ppm) to 15 ppm. The sulfur in diesel fuel must be lowered to enable modern pollution-control technology to be effective on heavy-duty vehicles. The fuel provision will be introduced in mid-2006 and will

allow engine manufacturers and refiners to have the flexibility to meet the new standards through a phased-in approach from 2007-2010.

Once the rule is fully implemented, approximately 2.6 million tons of smog-causing nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions will be reduced each year. The significant reduction in NOx emissions is extremely important in the Houston-Galveston area, as NOx is a major precursor for the formation of ground-level ozone. Furthermore, particulate matter will be reduced by 110,000 tons a year. The EPA estimates that the reduction of both of these pollutants will prevent 8,300 premature deaths, 5,500 cases of chronic bronchitis and 360,000 asthma attacks a year.

The Texas Gulf Coast Asthma Coalition

The Texas Gulf Coast Asthma Coalition (TGCAC) is a new organization in the Houston-Galveston area. Members include concerned citizens, health care providers, public health professionals, community-based organizations, managed-care organizations, and research and academic institutions.

TGCAC with its partnerships, exists to enhance the ability of individuals and organizations to reduce case numbers and improve quality of life for people with asthma within the Houston-Galveston area. Among the Coalition's purposes are to document the effects of air quality on asthma, raise awareness and promote diagnosis, and advocate the needs of asthma patients with policy makers.

The meeting schedule for the rest of the year 2001 are April 23, May 21, June 25, July 23, August 27, September 24, October 22, and November 26. There is no meeting scheduled for December. For information about the Asthma Coalition and its meetings, log on to www.txgulfcoastasthma.org.



Clean Air. It's Everybody's Business.

The Business Coalition for Clean Air, a project of the Greater Houston Partnership, has launched a major public information campaign with the theme, "Clean Air. It's Everybody's Business." The BCCA is committed to improving Houston's air quality through proven technology and cost-effective solutions, while maintaining the economic strength of the region. The organization endorses the Principles for Cleaner Air and coordinates advocacy efforts on behalf of the business community. The BCCA also helps maintain the focus on State Implementation Plan (SIP) development, educates the business community on clean air goals, and raises funds for technical, educational and advocacy needs.

To learn more about the BCCA or to download a copy of BCCA's 20-page booklet on clean air call 713-844-3600 visit www.houston.org.

Current Air Quality Bills in Texas Legislature

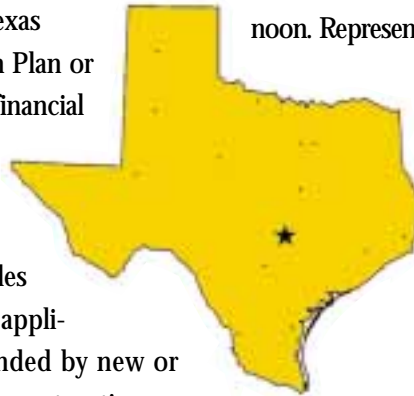
The 77th Texas Legislature, in session until the end of May, has been paying close attention to both the state and region's air quality problems. If you are interested in seeing what bills have been sponsored to date, please visit www.capitol.state.tx.us.

Emissions Reduction Bill Introduced in Legislature

Lake Jackson State Senator J.E. "Buster" Brown introduced an ambitious bill to help reduce air pollution around the state in March. The bill, known as the Texas Emissions Reduction Plan or Senate Bill 5, offers financial incentives for Texans to purchase cleaner diesel motor equipment and vehicles and energy-efficient appliances. The bill is funded by new or higher fees for new construction equipment, diesel vehicles, vehicle and motorboat licenses, and vehicle safety inspections. These and other fees would help pay for the financial incentives.

Besides lowering the costs of certain vehicles, the bill authorizes special license plates for qualifying vehicles that would allow them to go through toll roads for free and be driven on high-occupancy vehicle lanes regardless of the number of people on board.

Senator Brown designed the bill to complement the State Implementation Plans (SIP) for the Houston-Galveston, Dallas-Fort Worth and Beaumont-Port Arthur nonattainment areas. All three regions must come



into compliance with the ozone federal health standard. If enough pollution is eliminated by these incentives, then certain bans placed in the SIP may be eliminated. Bans to be considered to be replaced include the controversial ban on commercial lawn equipment before noon. Representatives from the Greater Houston Partnership, the U.S. EPA, and various environmental groups supports of this bill.

H-GAC Joins Clean Texas Program

Texas is a diverse state with differing environmental problems in each area. Clean Texas is a voluntary leadership program committed to developing statewide environmental partnerships to meet the unique needs of each area under one umbrella. The Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC) has identified eight new Regional Planning Areas based on similar physical, biological, and ecological features.

The Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) has recently joined Clean Texas as an Advocate. Advocates include community groups, trade associations, and schools and university groups. H-GAC is often called upon to lead by example in environmental stewardship and already has several programs in place that directly targets air pollution and conserving other resources.

For more information about the Clean Texas program visit www.cleantexas.org/index.html.



PROGRAM FUNDING

- 50% – Diesel equipment**
- 35% – Low emission and alternative fuel vehicles**
- 7.5% – Technology**
- 5% – Appliances**
- 2.5% – Administration**

H-GAC Hosts Houston Commuter Choice Workshop

On Wednesday, May 16, 2001, the Federal Commuter Choice Initiative will hold its first Commuter Choice Workshop in Houston. Local sponsors include H-GAC, Commute Solutions, and the Lone Star Chapter of the Association for Commuter Transportation (ACT). U.S. EPA's Stephan Sylvan will be the featured luncheon speaker. Mr. Sylvan has been assigned to work with the State of Texas on this initiative to reduce vehicle miles traveled and resulting emissions. Other workshop speakers include ACT Executive Director Stuart Anderson, and representatives from the Greater Houston Partnership (GHP), TNRCC, and business and industry.

Established by the U.S. EPA, the national Commuter Choice Leadership Initiative concentrates on the ten most congested cities in the United States, including Houston. Under this voluntary program, employers who join agree to reduce their energy consumption. Partners include U.S. companies, the U.S. Department of Transportation and state and local governments. These organizations will be recognized for their incentives that encourage commuting.

For more information about the EPA's national program, log on to www.epa.gov/oms/transp/comchoic/ccweb.htm. For more information about the half-day Houston workshop, contact the Commute Solutions Coordinator, Gay Pierce at 713-993-4521 or email gpierce@hgac.cog.tx.us.

Study Finds Heavy Tree Canopy Loss for Area

This past December, American Forests, a national conservation organization, published the initial results for the Houston Urban Eco-system Analysis. The study measured the change in landscape since 1972 to determine the loss of tree canopy due to the expansion of developed areas.

Using satellite imagery and GIS technology, the study showed that in 1972, areas with heavy tree canopy (50 percent or greater tree cover) covered 31 percent of the Houston metropolitan area, slightly over a million acres. Light tree canopy areas (20 percent or less) covered 63 percent, over two million acres. In 1999, areas with light tree canopy covered more than 71 percent of the land area, an increase of more than 200,000 acres. Heavy tree canopy areas covered 26 percent, a decrease of 150,000 acres. Today, the Houston area's average tree canopy represents a medium density category at 30 percent coverage. This trend suggests that as new development occurs, tree canopy is not being conserved.

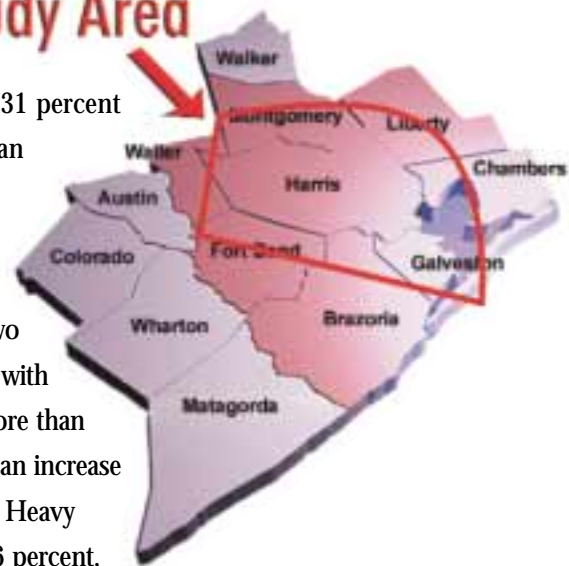
There are several economic and ecological implications of tree loss for clean air and stormwater management in the Houston area. The 1972 figures would have removed 98.5 million pounds of pollutants annually while today's canopy coverage only removes 83 million pounds of pollutants each year. To learn more about the study see www.americanforests.org.

Seasonal Smoke Causing Houston Haze

The TNRCC is closely monitoring smoke arriving in Texas from agricultural burning in Mexico and Central America. Fine particulates (PM_{2.5}) in the smoke may cause respiratory irritation. Sensitive individuals such as children, asthmatics, and the elderly, should avoid outdoor activity. In 1998, agricultural smoke caused several public health alerts in Texas. See

www.tnrcc.state.tx.us/exec/media/press.

Study Area



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Your comments are valuable.
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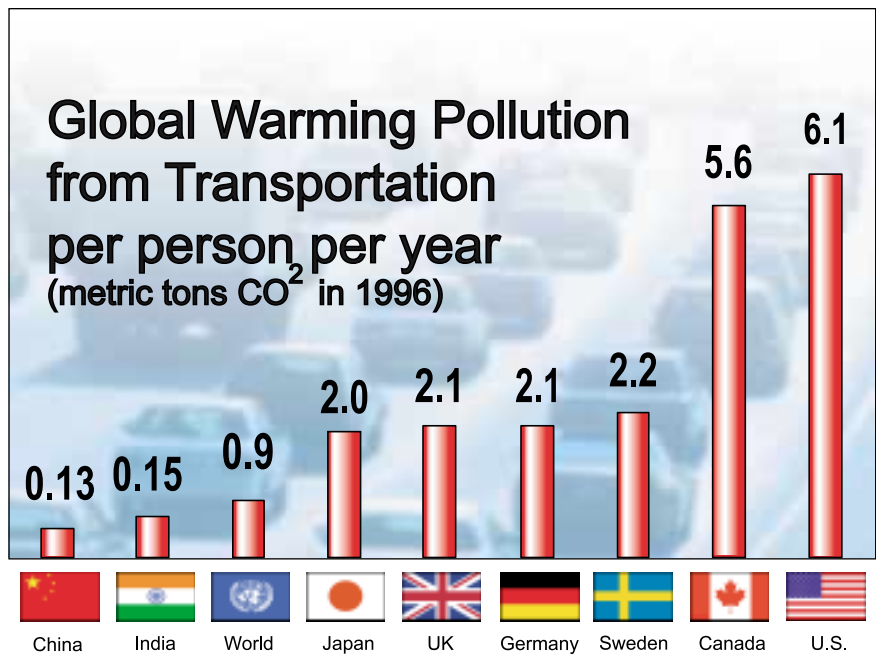
EPA Program Aims to Control Urban Sprawl

This Spring, the EPA will kick off its National Standard of Excellence program to help control urban sprawl and air pollution. The National Standard of Excellence is a memorandum of understanding (MOU) agreement that promotes the use of alternative transportation to and from work. The program is based on a tax law change passed by Congress in 1998 that lets employers provide workers with as much as \$65 a month in tax-free commuter vouchers, or lets them buy as much as \$65 in transit passes with pretax payroll deductions.

Under this initiative, the EPA works with employers and local governments to offer the best possible incentives to participate. The EPA helps an employer achieve these trip reduction goals by appointing an account manager, providing public recognition, communications tools and materials, and technical analysis and support. The EPA will also make available a web-based calculator that estimates the employer's cost savings and benefits from implementing this

DRIVING FACTS

- Driving has more than doubled since 1970 to 2.5 trillion miles every year
- SUVs & minivans now equal half the auto market polluting 3 to 5 times more than cars
- Every gallon of gasoline adds about 20 pounds global warming pollution
- Passenger vehicles cause 20% of U.S. global warming pollution



type of program. In return for the EPA's assistance, the employer must centralize information for employees, offer a variety of community choices, such as transit passes or telecommuting, parking cashout or equivalent. The employer must also offer a guaranteed ride home program and report progress to the EPA.

The EPA's first volunteers include representatives from four state and local governments and seven major corporations that already have some sort of commuting benefits program in place. Intel Corporation is just one of the programs currently meeting the standard. Intel's Rideshare program operates at its facilities in Arizona, California, New Mexico, Oregon, and Washington. Approximately 38 percent of all Intel employees participate in the RideShare program that includes choices of car-pooling, vanpooling, bicycling,

riding transit, telecommuting, compressed schedules, and walking. Intel also sponsors a variety of education programs, such as bicycle safety workshops and electric vehicle demonstrations.

The EPA hopes to expand its efforts by signing up more than a thousand major employers over the next two years.

If you are interested in learning more about alternative commuting options, the Houston-Galveston Area Council's Commute Solutions program can provide advice, answers and assistance on commuting options and employee transportation programs. For more information, please call (713) 627-3200 or visit www.commutesolutions-hou.com.





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Every day is another opportunity to clean up the air.

School Buses Linked to Cancer Risks

A new report released in February warns of possible cancer risks for students riding diesel school buses.

According to a study done in California by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and Coalition for Clean Air report, children who ride a diesel school bus may be exposed to up to four times more toxic diesel exhaust than when riding in a car. The focus group for this research is based on the average child riding the bus for one or two hours a day, 180 days per school year, for ten years. Researchers believe that the fumes inside these

buses may expose children to a cancer risk that is 23 to 46 times the cancer risk level set by the EPA.



Around the rest of the country, approximately 130 school districts operate a total of over 2,600 natural gas and propane school buses.

In the Houston area, Humble Independent School District and Rice

University each operate two dedicated electric buses. Over the past two years, Alvin ISD has purchased approximately 135 propane buses, 24 of them with the help of the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) and the Greater Houston Clean Cities program. For more information about this study, log on to

www.nrdc.org. To learn more about California rules, visit www.aqmd.gov. For more information about funding opportunities available through the Clean Cities program, visit www.houston-cleancities.org.

