



## ***Frequently Asked Questions***

**1. Q: What is air pollution?**

A: The term 'air pollution' refers to any harmful gas or particulate found in the air we breathe.

**2. Q: What types of air pollution are most common here in Tennessee?**

A: Two pollutants in particular are of concern to the Middle Tennessee area, ozone and particulate matter. Common causes of these pollutants include vehicle emissions, power plants, solvents, and small gasoline engines.

**3. Q: I thought ozone was good. Why are we concerned about it in the air?**

A: In the upper layers of the atmosphere, ozone is actually beneficial by blocking harmful UV rays, but ozone is a serious pollution problem when it occurs close to the ground where it can affect plants, animals and people. Ozone is a major component of smog especially during the summer, when weather conditions are ripe for ground-level ozone to form.

**4. Q: What are some of the risks of being exposed to ozone and particulate matter pollution?**

A: People with impaired respiratory systems and/or asthma are more likely to experience discomfort. Some of these symptoms include coughing, wheezing, chest pain when breathing deeply, sore or scratchy throat, and shortness of breath. Sometimes symptoms do not show up for a day or two after exposure.

**5. Q: What is ozone and how is it formed?**

A: Ozone is a molecule of three oxygen atoms. And although it does not come directly from automobile tailpipes, the chemicals it is made up of do. When nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) are emitted from cars, trucks, lawnmowers, etc., and combine with strong sunlight, ozone is formed. That is why it is considered a summertime problem.

**6. Q: What is particulate matter and how is it formed?**

A: Particulate matter 2.5 (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) can be produced directly or may form in the atmosphere when other pollutants react. It consists of microscopic fine particles—some only as wide as 1/28<sup>th</sup> the width of a human hair—that can be breathed deeply into the lungs.

**7. Q: What can I do to help reduce air pollution?**

A: There are many things you can do to help reduce air pollution.

- ◆ carpool or take the bus to work
- ◆ bring your lunch to work or walk to lunch
- ◆ combine errands into one trip
- ◆ keep cars maintained and tires inflated
- ◆ reduce the use of small gasoline engines
- ◆ share this information with your friends and neighbors