



# news release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **AIR QUALITY ADVISORY ISSUED FOR FRIDAY, AUGUST 3, 2007 BY WESTCHESTER COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

The Westchester County Health Department is advising residents who are sensitive to air quality to consider reducing prolonged or strenuous physical activity on Friday, August 3rd after air quality advisories were issued by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT).

“The DEC is reporting an elevated level of fine particles in the air for the Metropolitan New York City Region, which includes Westchester, and the Long Island region,” said Dr. Joshua Lipsman, Commissioner of Health for Westchester. “This should not be a concern for most people, but those with heart or respiratory disease, as well as children and older adults, may want to avoid prolonged or heavy exertion.”

Fine particles in the air, also referred to as particulate matter or PM 2.5, are so small that several thousand could fit on the period at the end of this sentence. Being so tiny, they are able to pass through the respiratory tract and reach the lungs. Long-term exposure may worsen asthma and heart disease, while short-term effects may include irritation of the eyes, nose, throat, and lungs, leading to coughing, sneezing, and shortness of breath.

There are many sources of particulate matter in the air, including motor vehicle exhausts and wood smoke from wild fires. Fine particles can also be formed by chemical reactions in the atmosphere and may be carried hundreds of miles on air currents. Out-of-state power plants are believed to be a major source of air pollution in Westchester. Levels of fine particles in the air tend to be higher when the air is still. Indoor sources, such as tobacco smoke, candles, and oil lamps, can pollute the air with fine particles.

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When outdoor levels of fine particles are elevated, the Westchester County Health Department recommends limiting strenuous activities and reducing exposure by spending less time outdoors. It is also important to avoid raising levels of indoor air particles by not smoking or burning candles.

The New York State DOT is also forecasting high levels of ozone and has declared Friday an Air Quality Action Day. Ground-level ozone is a respiratory irritant that can trigger asthma attacks and aggravate emphysema, bronchitis, and other respiratory ailments.

Besides contributing to particulate matter in the air, motor vehicles are also a primary cause of ground - level ozone. On Air Quality Action Days, the DOT offers this advice to reduce air pollution from motor vehicle use:

- Combine errands into a single trip, rather than separate trips. This can help save time and reduce pollution.
- Postpone unnecessary trips. Avoiding motor vehicle trips on Air Quality Action Days will prevent the formation of air pollution.
- Take the subway, bus or train to and from work on Air Quality Action Days.
- Ride in a carpool if you know someone to share a ride with.
- Bring lunch to work or walk to lunch instead of driving out to get it. You'll save time, money and help to improve our air.
- Refuel your vehicle in the evening when it's cooler outside.
- Avoid letting your vehicle idle, such as at a fast food or bank teller drive-thru.
- Avoid operating gas-powered gardening equipment such as lawn mowers on Air Quality Action Days. Wait for a day when air quality is better, or get a push mower or electrical equipment.

For more information please contact the Westchester County Health Department at (914) 813-5000 or visit the Health Department website at [www.westchestergov.com/health](http://www.westchestergov.com/health).