

[back to article](#)



---

# Project focuses on ozone and improving air quality

## 'Air We Breathe' to educate public about air pollution

By [Dudley Brown](#)  
[dudley.brown@gshj.com](mailto:dudley.brown@gshj.com)

Published: Wednesday, July 1, 2009 at 3:15 a.m.

Business groups, an environmental nonprofit and local government are coming together to educate people about ground-level ozone and what individuals can do to improve air quality.

"The Air We Breathe" is a project led by the Spartanburg County Air Quality Advisory Committee. Its partners include Upstate Forever, the Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce, the Spartanburg Development Association and Spartanburg County.

The initiative also is an effort to keep the county from facing federal restrictions for bad ozone readings.

"This isn't going to be a hundred yard dash," said Lee Blair, executive vice president of the Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce. "It's going to be a marathon."

Ground-level ozone is created when chemical reactions between oxides of nitrogen and volatile organic compounds are in the presence of sunlight. Emissions from manufacturers, electric utilities and motor vehicles are some of the most common contributors to ground-level ozone.

The group has launched a Web site, [www.cleanairspartanburg.com](http://www.cleanairspartanburg.com), so people can monitor each day's ozone forecast and learn ways they can reduce ground-level ozone.

"The Air We Breathe" could help the county meet tougher federal Clean Air Standards going into effect in 2010. In 2002, the county entered an Early Action Compact with the Environmental Protection Agency to give it a grace period before facing restrictions after its ground-level ozone exceeded national limits. The

compact ends in 2010.

In 2004, Spartanburg, Greenville, Anderson, York, Lexington and Richland counties were labeled in "non-attainment" for failure to be within acceptable levels of ground-level ozone determined by the EPA. Spartanburg County still exceeds the national standard of 0.08 parts per million, according to 2008 data, and that standard will be lowered to 0.075 ppm in March 2010. According to the EPA, Spartanburg's average eight-hour ground-level ozone reading is 0.084 ppm over a three-year period.

"If we have in 2009 a bad ozone season, we move a step closer to the penalty box," said Don Woodward, president and CEO of the Spartanburg Development Association.

Woodward said being labeled "non-attainment" could limit the amount of federal highway funding the Upstate receives and there could be federal restrictions on future development.

Ground-level ozone can lead to chest pain, coughing and throat irritation. It also can worsen bronchitis, emphysema and asthma.

"Not only are we ashamed, but our reputation and perception outside is damaged," Woodward said of a "non-attainment" status.

The group is encouraging people in Spartanburg County to know each day's ozone forecast, especially between April and October when ground-level ozone readings tend to be higher because of warmer temperatures. People will be encouraged to carpool, walk or delay mowing lawns on days when the forecast is moderate or unhealthy.

"We think it's reasonable to ask people to make some of these minor changes when prompted," said Chris Story, assistant county administrator.

Angela Viney, director of Upstate Forever's Spartanburg office, said the group wants to work with the county's businesses and promote them being ozone champions.

Woodward said he hopes getting the community to alter behavior and pay attention to ozone levels will be similar to efforts taken to encourage recycling a few years ago.

"Recycling is an accepted behavior," Woodward said. "We kind of get the message and understand what that's all about."

---