

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**NORTHEAST AND MID-ATLANTIC STATES RAISE PUBLIC
AWARENESS OF HEALTH IMPACTS OF GROUND-LEVEL OZONE
POLLUTION**

(Washington, DC)—The Ozone Transport Commission (OTC) is announcing May 20-24 as “Ozone Awareness Week” in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic States. This week, States throughout the region will promote awareness of the health effects of ground-level ozone, and actions the public may take to help reduce pollution.

States will use Ozone Awareness Week as an opportunity to educate the public on ways to stay informed when ground-level ozone may be at unhealthy levels, and to promote programs that reduce ozone-causing emissions such as commuting options and energy efficiency. Ozone levels are at their highest between May and September. Many States will hold events throughout the summer ozone season to promote ozone awareness.

Ground-level ozone, the main ingredient in smog, forms during warm weather when pollution from vehicles, power plants, industry, and households reacts with sunlight. Exposure to ground-level ozone can cause lung inflammation and irreversible lung damage, and aggravates asthma and other respiratory conditions and illnesses. Children and individuals with acute and chronic respiratory problems, and healthy individuals working or exercising outdoors are particularly at risk from ground-level ozone exposure. As ozone levels increase, the severity of health effects also increases. Symptoms may include coughing, rapid or painful breathing, nose or throat irritation, and asthma and allergy attacks.

Because ground-level ozone occurs over a broad geographical region, the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic States are working cooperatively to implement ozone reducing control measures, and have advocated emission reductions across the eastern United States to address this public health problem.

OTC is a multi-state organization whose main focus is to develop regional solutions to the ground-level problem in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. It is committed to finding innovative approaches that maximize public health and environmental benefits. OTC was created by Congress, and its members include: Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Virginia.