

ON THE AIR

Spring/
Summer
2008

A Newsletter about
Clean Air. Provided
by Spokane Regional
Clean Air Agency.

Summertime Safety

Keeping Kids Safe from Smog

Those lazy, crazy, and hazy days of summer are here! If you spend time with kids in the summer, you want to keep them safe while providing fun outdoor experiences. Did you know that on those hazy days, Spokane's air quality may be at or close to unhealthy? When this occurs, you should avoid strenuous outdoor activity, particularly if you have asthma or other respiratory conditions.

Microscopic smoke particles, typically from regional wildfires, and ground-level ozone pollution are the main pollutants in the air during summer.

Ground-level ozone: Ozone is formed when pollutants, such as gasoline vapors and other compounds, react in the presence of sunlight. To protect public health, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently strengthened the health-based standard for ozone.

Ozone can cause coughing, throat irritation, and pain when taking a deep breath. It can also reduce lung function, inflame the lining of the lungs, and even trigger asthma attacks. Repeated inflam-

mation over time may permanently scar lung tissue.

Fine particles: Microscopic particles of smoke can travel great distances and remain suspended in the air for a long time. Our area has been impacted by wildfires burning hundreds of miles away. When inhaled, smoke particles bypass the body's natural defense system and can lodge deep into the lungs.

Your chances of being affected by air pollution increase the longer you are active outdoors or the more strenuous the activity. Kids and teens who are active outdoors—especially those with asthma or other respiratory problems—are particularly sensitive.

Check the Air Quality Index:

Current and forecasted air quality conditions are just a click or a phone call away:

www.spokanecleanair.org or 477-2571.

Fortunately, most of our summer days are in the good or moderate range, so get out there and enjoy the beautiful summer weather and fresh air! ■

The Air Quality Index (AQI) is a scale used to report how clean or polluted the air is. This data, including a two-day forecast, is available online at www.spokanecleanair.org. You can also sign up to receive air quality information by e-mail. Current air quality levels are also available by calling the AQI recording at 477-2571.

AQI Value	Health Concern	Color Code
0 to 50	Good	Green
51 to 100	Moderate	Yellow
101 to 150	Unhealthy for sensitive groups	Orange
151 to 200	Unhealthy	Red
201 to 300	Very Unhealthy	Purple

Actions You Can Take: When the AQI reports unhealthy levels:

- ✿ Limit physical exertion outdoors, especially in mid-afternoon to early evening when ozone levels tend to peak.
- ✿ Know how to recognize symptoms of respiratory discomfort, such as coughing, wheezing and breathing difficulty, and reduce exposure if these occur.
- ✿ Rotate players in physically exerting games. Rest players to reduce exertion.
- ✿ Provide alternative activities. Allow kids with asthma or other respiratory problems to participate in activities that are less physical when pollution levels are unhealthy. If pollution is particularly high, move physical activities indoors where the air may be filtered by an air conditioning unit.
- ✿ Be vigilant about asthma management. Adequate medication should be on-hand and the asthma management plan followed.

Spokane Transit Rolls Out Hybrids

2008 marked a big step in an environmentally-friendly direction for Spokane Transit, with the purchase of three hybrid buses.

Compared with a standard coach, a hybrid is better for the environment, producing up to 60 percent fewer nitrogen oxide emissions, 90 percent fewer particulate, hydrocarbon and carbon monoxide emission, and using 31,000-35,000 gallons less diesel fuel.

The 40-foot Gillig diesel-electric coaches are also quieter than typical diesel coaches, ideal for downtown Spokane's environment.

In total, the buses cost \$1.76 million with a federal grant providing 80 percent of the funding.

The buses operate using a blend of diesel and electric power. When driving under 10 miles per hour, an

electric drive system moves the vehicle. Power for engaging and accelerating the bus is delivered by an electric drive system located on the top of the bus and the braking system serves as a generator to recharge the batteries.

Visually, the coaches look similar to regular diesels except for a large area on the top of the bus housing the batteries for the drive system and some unique hybrid markings.

STA plans to monitor the performance of these coaches with an eye toward future hybrid bus purchases.

"Provided there are no serious maintenance issues, STA will certainly try to secure funding to buy more hybrids," said Chris Tohm of STA. For more information, visit: www.spokanetransit.org. ■

by John Williamson, Intern



STA Stats:

Adult Ridership:

Increased 23.2 percent

Student/College Pass Ridership:

Increased 38.3 percent

Youth Ridership:

Increased 30 percent

Employee Sponsored

Bus Pass Program:

Increased 16.5 percent

Adult Pass/Smartcard Sales:

Increased 8.9 percent

City Ticket Sales:

Increased 19.2 percent

Student/College Pass Sales:

Increased 29.7 percent

Youth Pass/Smart Card Sales:

Increased 19.5 percent

Source: Spokane Transit Agency, Dec, 2006-Dec. 2007 comparisons

Commute Stats:

Miles driven per day: 16,760,007

Percent of Solo Drivers:

80 percent of commuters drive alone to work

Percent of Transit Riders:

2 percent of commuters take the bus to work

Vehicle Trips Per Day:

1,560,402 trips per day

Source: Spokane Regional Transportation Council, 2005

No Idle Zone hits the streets!



Tom Brattebo, an AmeriCorps Volunteer, with his granddaughter, Ella.

Brattebo is implementing the No Idle Zone program in schools and communities around Spokane.

For more information about the AmeriCorps volunteer program in eastern Washington, visit www.pcei.org

Children are more vulnerable to pollution than adults, breathing in 50 percent more air per pound of body weight. Even 30-seconds of less idling can make a precious difference. For this reason, the Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency, together with the American Lung Association of Washington (ALAW) Spokane Office are facilitating the "No Idle Zone" program at area schools.

Over 10 percent of children in Washington have asthma and the number is rising, according to the ALAW. Yet schools are one of the most common places for unnecessary idling.

Each vehicle dropping off and picking up kids from school puts three pounds of pollution into the air every month, increasing the risk of asthma and other heart and lung problems.

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We Love Our New Wood Stove!

Since the Woodstove Change-out Program launched in January, close to 200 area homeowners have applied for rebate vouchers. The vouchers are used toward a new gas or wood device when they relinquish their old, non-certified stove or insert. Qualified homeowners choose wood, gas or pellet devices.

The current program is funded by a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency,

with additional support from Spokane Clean Air, the NW Hearth, Patio and BBQ Associate, and Avista.

Eighty-six devices have been replaced to date, with about 35% choosing natural gas devices and 65% staying with wood. The emissions benefits from replacing these 86 devices with new technology wood and gas equates to over 30 tons of air pollution.

Replacing old wood stoves and fireplace inserts benefits both outdoor and

indoor air quality. Researchers in Montana found a significant drop in indoor levels of microscopic soot and smoke particles after the old wood stoves were removed and replaced with new devices.

Wood stove emissions have been associated with increases in respiratory ailments. Soot and smoke pollution can

Replacing 86 old woodstoves with new devices eliminates 30 tons of air pollution.

also cause lung problems and exacerbate existing conditions such as asthma.

“The change-out program is designed to reduce smoke in our neighborhoods,” said Bill Dameworth, Spokane Clean Air Director. “Smoke contributes to respiratory illness, particularly in children and the elderly.”

Qualified residents include homeowners living in the Spokane County Smoke Control Zone who use a non-certified wood stove or fireplace insert to heat their home during the winter.

Those who qualify are provided a list of participating retailers who sell wood, gas and/or pellet stoves.



Stanford Brown with his new wood stove. He replaced his old, inefficient wood stove for a new, cleaner device.

Stanford Brown, a participant in change-out program, raved about the benefits of the new certified wood stove he got in January.

“We love the product and love the service,” he said. “It heats the entire downstairs. I really like the simple way the program is structured. It was easy to do.”

Funding to continue the changeout program has been awarded by the Washington State Department of Ecology. For information call Lisa at 477-4727, ext. # 115. ■

No Idle Zone

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“I have monitored unnecessary idling at schools, drive-thru lines, train crossings and parking lots,” said Tom Brattebo, an AmeriCorps Volunteer with Spokane Clean Air.

“I have talked to many people about the impacts of unnecessary idling and the response is invariably, ‘Oh, I didn’t know that,’ and they turn the car off.”

Through the “No Idle Zone” program, schools are creating healthier environments for their students.

Each participating school agrees to post two “No Idle Zone Signs” in the student drop-off and pick-up areas and distribute information to families about idling.

Schools can also involve students in the process, through math and science activities such as data collection and analysis of idling behaviors.

“We’re going to incorporate the program into our math and science curriculum,” said Bev Saruwatari, a sixth-grade teacher at Hamblen Elementary. “It blends in with our curriculum plus it is good for all of us to know.”

Twenty schools in Spokane County are on-board with the program, and fifty others are planning to kick-off the program this fall.

Cities are also promoting the idea to reduce vehicle idling. The City of Liberty Lake was the first in Washington to pass a “No Idle Zone” resolution to encourage residents to voluntarily reduce unnecessary idling. Soon after, the City of Millwood joined in.

Learn more about the program and how to get your school involved, call 477-4727, ext. #126. ■

by John Williamson, Intern

◆ AIR QUALITY CALENDAR ◆

- Jul. 2: Board of Directors meeting, 9 a.m, Lower Level, Commissioners Hearing Room, Spokane County Public Works Bldg, 1026 W. Broadway Ave. Agendas and minutes are posted at www.spokanecleanair.org.
- Aug. 7: Board of Directors meeting, see details above.
- Aug. 9: Kids Day at Riverfront Park. Stop by Spokane Clean Air's booth and participate in some fun activities.

Mow Down Air Pollution And Win !



The **Mow Down Air Pollution** promotion is back, thanks again to generous donations from Black and Decker. Throughout the month of July, area residents can enter-to-win electric yard tools donated by Black and Decker and a one-hour landscape consultation from Swenson's nursery. In addition to the weekly prize give-aways, grand prize drawings will be held for an electric lawn mower and a hotel/dinner package from the Montvale Hotel and Catacombs restaurant. For complete contest rules, visit www.spokanecleanair.org or call 477-4727.

Help Mow Down Air Pollution:

Mow later. Mowing late afternoon or evening reduces the amount of gas vapors in the air during the day, when ground-level ozone is forming.

Avoid gas spills. One shot glass (1 oz) of spilled gas is equivalent to the pollution emitted by driving 25 miles.

Keep equipment running smooth. Follow manufacturer's guide for maintaining your mower.

Consider cleaner options. Switch to electric or manual tools—it's better for our environment and it will save you time and money on gas and repairs.

Reduce Mowing. Use low-maintenance turf grasses or other seed mixtures that grow slowly and require less frequent mowing. Decrease lawn area: plant native trees, shrubs or create ornamental rock gardens, etc. ■

Take Note!

On the Air is a publication of the Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency. Its purpose is to inform local residents on all aspects of outdoor air pollution. Please contact Lisa Woodard, *Editor*, with comments or story ideas: Phone: 477-4727, ext. # 115 Fax: 477-6828 Email: lwoodard@spokanecleanair.org

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