

# OZONE REDUCTION SURVEY RESULTS SPRING and SUMMER 1998

## Executive Summary

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## Executive Summary

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD), in conjunction with the Environmental Economics Program (EEP) at Georgia State University, designed the Voluntary Ozone Action Project (VOAP) to educate Georgians about the effects of ground level ozone and to promote actions that reduce ozone-causing emissions. To inform their efforts, EPD and EEP engaged the Applied Research Center at Georgia State University to survey residents of the Atlanta metropolitan area about ground level ozone. This report presents the results of the most recent surveys for that purpose—the Spring and Summer 1998 surveys. While previous surveys focused on the behaviors and attitudes of residents concerning ground level ozone, the Spring and Summer 1998 surveys added questions about the salience of issues and attitudes toward improving air quality.

## Major Findings

### Awareness of Ground Level Ozone

The information campaign conducted during the ozone season appears to affect Atlantans' awareness of ground level ozone. The percentage of respondents remembering an ozone alert and the percentage that felt "well-informed" about ozone issues rose during Summer 1998, suggesting a link to the season and the accompanying information campaign.

Television remains the main source of information about ground level ozone, with magazines and newspapers close behind in the rankings. In the Fall and Spring surveys, a much smaller percentage of respondents indicated that digital highway signs provided information. Yet, during the ozone season, when use of the highway signs is most frequent, the percentage citing the signs as a source of information skyrocketed.

Not surprisingly, the 62% of respondents who reported paying attention to newspaper articles on state and local issues exhibited higher levels of awareness than those not paying attention. Of the "attentive" group, 57% "felt well-informed," compared to 43% of the "inattentive" group.

### Personal Salience

While respondents do not perceive the Environment as the most important issue facing the Atlanta area, they do express significant personal concern for environmental issues. Respondents indicated, however, that community concern for these issues is not as intense as personal concern. Specifically, with the issues of 1) the Environment, 2) Air Quality, and 3) Ground Level Ozone, the differences between personal concern and perceived community concern for these issues were greater than for any other issues. Ground Level Ozone received the lowest ratings of concern at both the personal and community level, but both showed increases since the Spring.

### Perceived Impacts of Ground Level Ozone

Respondents indicated that damage to the environment and the cost of clean up were the outcomes of ground level ozone that affect them most profoundly. Health problems were viewed as the outcomes with the least impact, despite the fact that one quarter of respondents suffer from respiratory problems. At the same time, the impact of ground level ozone on health has increased, while many other outcomes have shown decreases in impact levels.

### Opinions about Public Support for Improving Air and Water Quality

Metro Atlanta residents indicated that public support for improving air and water quality in the Atlanta region is not changing overall, with most viewing public support as "about the same." Respondents appear to perceive more support for action to improve water quality than for air quality. The small percentage of respondents who feel that support for improving air and water quality is losing ground increased from Spring 1998 to Summer 1998.

### Attitudes and Opinions about Improving Air Quality

Respondents indicated about equal levels of support for voluntary and regulatory action to improve air quality. Atlanta metro residents appear to recognize that air quality is a problem in the region by disagreeing with the statement to the contrary.

### Behaviors and Ground Level Ozone

While some respondents were able to cite one or more actions taken in response to ozone alerts, the percentages reporting multiple actions remained roughly the same as in past surveys. The percentage indicating no action in response to alerts increased in the Spring and Summer 1998 surveys from the Spring 1997 survey. It is difficult to discern from this information if VOAP has progressed toward its goal of changing behaviors that cause ground level ozone.

Regarding commuting behaviors, overall, Atlanta residents appear to be driving longer distances every day, although these proportions dropped from Spring 1998 to Summer 1998. With regard to the number of car trips per day, some good news has emerged. This pattern--increasing from Spring 1997 and Fall 1997 to Spring 1998, then decreasing in Summer 1998--emerged for other behaviors like rush hour driving and driving alone to work. The proportion of respondents using mass transit at least once in the previous week increased in Spring 1998, perhaps signifying that intermittent changes in commuting behaviors are possible.

As for other ground level ozone producing behaviors, overall the findings were mixed. The percentages of respondents reporting certain negative driving behaviors declined slightly in Spring 1998—for exceeding the speed limit, driving to lunch, and quick-starting at intersections--but then increased again in Summer 1998. On the positive side, the proportion of respondents using any kind of gasoline-powered equipment has dropped since Spring 1997. However, the vast majority of respondents continue to use gas-powered mowers.

### Knowledge of Ground Level Ozone Pollution

While the knowledge of Atlanta area residents improved in some areas since Spring and Fall 1997, overall the same information needs emerged in the Spring 1998 and Summer 1998 surveys as in past surveys. Specifically, the lowest percentage of correct answers occurred on questions concerning 1)the seasonal nature of ground level ozone, 2)the relationship between ground level ozone and aerosol spray cans, and 3)the distinction between ground level ozone and the ozone layer.

Overall, respondents' knowledge about ground level ozone does not appear to have changed from Spring 1997 and Fall 1997. While the percentages of respondents answering questions correctly rose for specific questions, the increases occurred mostly for questions with low percentages of correct answers. For example, the percentage of respondents

indicating that the CFCs in aerosol spray cans do not cause ground level ozone increased from Spring 1997 to Summer 1998; yet, only 22% answered correctly in Summer 1998.

#### Attitudes about Outcomes of Ground Level Ozone

While the majority of respondents agree that reducing ground level ozone will reduce respiratory problems, they do not view Atlanta's air problems on the same level as those in other cities, nor as a threat to economic vitality. These attitudes appear to be changing, however, as the average agreement ratings from Fall 1997 to Spring 1998 and from Spring 1998 to Summer 1998 indicate increased recognition that poor air quality might have an effect on businesses' economic decisions.

