

Reducing Air Pollution

Why Refuel After 6 P.M.?

Ever wonder why The Clean Air Campaign recommends filling up your gas tank after 6 p.m.? The answer is simple: refueling after 6 p.m. reduces the air pollution impact associated with filling your tank and helps us all breathe easier. Here's why:

What Is Air Pollution?

When people talk about air pollution or "smog" in metro Atlanta, they are referring to one of two pollutants: ground-level ozone or particle pollution. Refueling does not have an impact on metro Atlanta's year-round particle pollution problem, but it does contribute to ground-level ozone.

Facts About Ground-Level Ozone

- Ground-level ozone is a colorless, highly reactive gas that is formed when nitrogen oxides (NOx) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) come into contact with heat and sunlight.
- Given the importance of heat and sunlight, ozone is principally a summertime problem. It is for this reason that May through September is referred to as "Smog Season" in metro Atlanta.
- VOCs are associated with sources that emit strong fumes and vapors. Gasoline, oil-based paints and solvents are all sources of VOCs. Trees and vegetation are natural sources of VOCs.
- NOx (pronounced "knocks") is created through the combustion process associated with engines and boilers. The biggest sources of NOx in metro Atlanta are cars and trucks, non-road vehicles (including construction equipment) and power plants.
- Highest ground-level ozone concentrations occur between 2 and 7 p.m.

How We Are Affected?

When we breathe in ozone, it can inflame the lining of the airways and lungs. The most common symptoms associated with ozone exposure are a feeling of chest tightness, dry cough and difficulty breathing. Emergency room visits for asthma and other respiratory problems spike whenever there is a high level of ground-level ozone. Since the highest concentrations occur in the afternoon and evenings, you can avoid exposure to ozone even on Smog Alert days by running in the mornings.

Why Refuel After 6 P.M.?

When you fill up, vapors escape into the air, adding VOCs to the ground-level ozone mixture. By waiting until after the heat of the day, you are contributing less to the chemical soup of pollutants to be cooked by the hot summer sun that produces unhealthy concentrations of ozone.

What Else Can I Do?

Sign up for Smog Alerts at cleanaircampaign.com and spread the word about the need to delay fueling until after 6 p.m. Combine errands, carpool, use public transportation and take other steps to reduce driving. Visit cleanaircampaign.com for more tips on becoming part of the air pollution solution.

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