



## DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

BOBBY JINDAL  
GOVERNOR

HAROLD LEGGETT, Ph.D.  
SECRETARY

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Contact: Jean Kelly  
Phone: 225-219-3966

### Louisiana meets air quality standards for ozone

BATON ROUGE – Air Quality monitoring data shows that in 2008 Louisiana met federal ozone standards for both the original one-hour and the 1997 eight-hour standards. The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality has validated its 2008 air quality data, which shows all of Louisiana in compliance with both standards.

In the 1970s, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency set a one-hour ozone standard at 120 parts per billion. This was replaced in 1997 with a rolling eight-hour average of 85 parts per billion. In 2008, that rolling eight-hour average was lowered to 75 parts per billion. Attainment designations for the new standard are scheduled for March 2010, but may be delayed pending several lawsuits.

Historically, the only area in Louisiana area that has remained out of attainment for the ozone standard was the five-parish Baton Rouge area of Iberville, West Baton Rouge, Ascension, Livingston and East Baton Rouge parishes. The data for the past three consecutive years shows that this area meets both standards with highest one-hour value of 114 parts per billion and the highest eight-hour value of 83 parts per billion in that time period. Based upon this most recent data, DEQ has begun the process of asking EPA to recognize Louisiana as in attainment with the federal standards.

“The data show that Louisiana’s air quality continues to improve,” said DEQ Secretary Harold Leggett. “We can see that improvement in industry practices, a greater public awareness of ozone and the implementation of rules and regulations concerning air quality have made a difference. The efforts of many people have contributed to this accomplishment.”

Ozone is formed by the reaction of sunlight on air containing hydrocarbons (VOCs) and nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>). VOCs and NO<sub>x</sub> are produced by mobile sources such as cars, boats and heavy construction equipment, industrial sources, natural sources and household activities such as using gas-powered lawn equipment and using paint thinners. High levels of ozone can affect lung function and irritate the respiratory system in sensitive populations like children and the elderly. It can worsen chronic health conditions like bronchitis, emphysema and asthma.