



## Clean Air

While Texas has made tangible and significant progress in cleaning up air pollution, we are still being attacked by population growth, older vehicles, the continued use of coal-powered electricity and flares, fugitive emissions, and drilling near cities. All of these factors contribute to a massive pollution problem: ground-level ozone.

Ozone is composed of three oxygen atoms that come together to form ozone (O<sub>3</sub>). We like it way up in the atmosphere (the "ozone layer") because it protects us from UV radiation from the sun. But down at the ground level it can have devastating effects on children, the elderly, and those with asthma or other health conditions. Ground-level ozone is formed when nitrogen oxide (NO<sub>x</sub>) emissions from cars and trucks, coal plants, and other industrial sources combine with volatile organic compounds (VOCs) from automobile exhaust and natural sources in the presence of sunlight. In most metropolitan areas, vehicles are the major (but not only) source of pollution contributing to ground-level ozone. Industrial sources in areas like Houston, coal plants outside of the Dallas-Fort Worth area, and oil and gas drilling also contribute to the formation of ozone in some areas such as San Antonio.

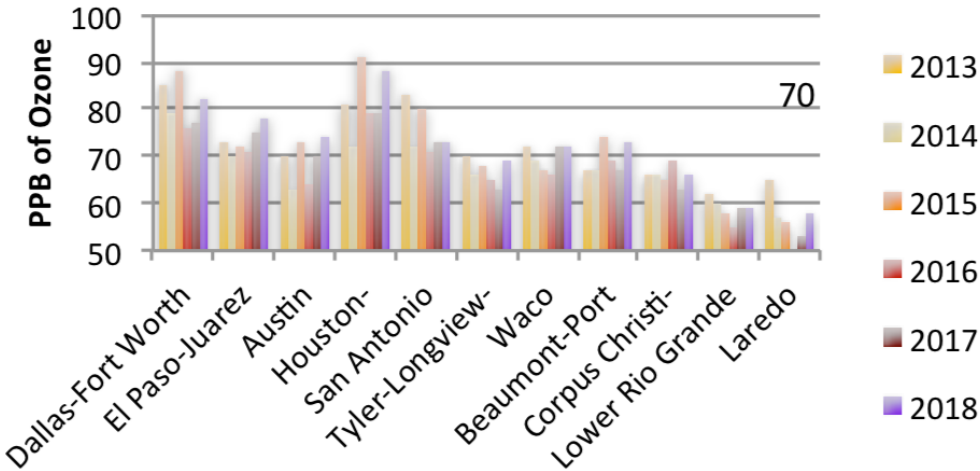
Ground-level ozone has obvious health impacts, such as premature deaths, increased heart attacks, and increased incidence of asthma. We regulate it under the 1990 Clean Air Act due to its hazardous nature, and it is measured through state, local, and private air monitoring stations strategically placed around major metropolitan areas. The U.S. EPA is charged with setting a limit on how much ozone pollution should be allowed in a given area, and determining which areas are considered in "attainment" with the standard or not. The areas that are in non-attainment with the ozone pollution limit must devise a State Implementation Plan (SIP) to lower ground-level ozone levels. Under the Obama Administration, the EPA declared that the new 2015 ozone standard is 70 parts per billion (measured over an eight-hour period).

Non-attainment areas must come up with SIPs to get below that level in the coming years.

Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio areas were all declared non-attainment under the new standard, and along with other municipal areas which nearly violate the new standard, these areas must take action to clean up their air over the next three to six years. Ozone levels in 2018 spiked and multiple cities in Texas had days when the air was too dirty to breathe safely. The Houston region had over a month's worth of days—35, to be exact—that were considered unsafe to breathe outdoors. The Dallas region was a close second with 29 days, while San Antonio and El Paso tied with 13 days. Austin was not far behind.

Indeed, from the Gulf Coast to North Texas to West Texas, the state had 500 ozone “exceedances” this year, which is 100 more exceedances than the past two years (2016 - 2017) combined! An ozone “exceedance” means that air monitors are detecting ozone levels spiking above the federal air quality standard for the protection of human health.

### 4th-Highest 8-Hour Ozone Levels by Metro, 2013-2018



## **We have the solutions: reauthorize and fund Texas Emissions Reduction Plan (TERP) and Low-Income Vehicle Repair and Replacement Program or Drive a Clean Machine (LIRAP).**

TERP and LIRAP are two unique programs designed to replace dirty vehicles and equipment with newer cleaner technologies. TERP was authorized back in 2001 and has provided incentives for construction and transportation equipment, as well as new technologies like electric vehicles and energy storage. TERP has been an unequivocal success in reducing air pollution, but unfortunately the Texas Legislature has not fully allocated the revenues that support the program. Indeed, by the end of 2019, there will be more than \$1.7 billion sitting idle at the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts. Additionally, the fees that support TERP run out in 2019. In 2005, the Texas Legislature created LIRAP, which provides incentives to drivers whose vehicle fail air emission inspections tests and money to local government to enforce car emission standards.

The incentives can be used to help defray the costs of a new vehicle or repair an existing vehicle. While the program has been successful in repairing and replacing thousand of vehicles in major cities, Governor Abbott took the unprecedented action of vetoing the \$80 million budget for these programs. His reasoning was cost-effectiveness. However, drivers in the Austin, Dallas and Houston areas have contributed more than \$150 million to the program that has not been spent by the Legislature. These funds must be used for air quality measures in our urban counties and we will work to create a program that works for everyone.

The Legislature must reauthorize the fees the support TERP until we clean up our ozone problem, and allocate at least \$200 million per year to finally clean up our urban smog mess. The Legislature should also maintain all the TERP fees that have been collected in the TERP account and not allow them to be used for other purposes. In conclusion, the Legislature must make common-sense changes to the LIRAP program and allocate at least \$50 million per year, as well as give local government more control to help clean up the air.