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Vancouver/Portland Air Pollution Approaches Unhealthy Level
Southwest Clean Air Agency Calls Citizens to Action

VANCOUVER – Unusually high levels of air pollution during the month of August require the Southwest Clean Air Agency to inform citizens about the harmful effects of ground level ozone (also known as smog).

According to the Carus ozone monitoring site, the Vancouver/Portland region has already experienced two days of unhealthy air pollution levels during the month of August. Such levels of air pollution levels not only diminish visibility, but can also contribute to major health problems.

“Our primary concern is to protect the health of Clark County residents,” said Bob Elliott, executive director of the SWCAA. “The Southwest Clean Air Agency advises all Clark County residents to help us maintain healthy air in our region by reducing air pollution when hot summer weather is present throughout the Vancouver/Portland region.”

Ground level ozone occurs when nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds react with intense heat. The last time the SWCAA was required to alert Vancouver/Portland citizens about unhealthy air pollution levels was during the summer days of 1998 when air pollutants combined with extreme temperature to create official exceedances of the health standard. Over the course of the past three years, Clark County’s booming population has also created an increase in atmospheric air pollution levels.

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ADD ONE: Vancouver/Portland Air Pollution Approaches Unhealthy Level

Prolonged exposure to ground level ozone can cause lung damage, eye irritation, respiratory tract problems and damage to vegetation. Smog is particularly harmful to pregnant women, young children, the elderly and those who have chronic heart or lung disease.

The SWCAA encourages all citizens to help clear the air during the summer months. The Agency has issued the following guidelines for reducing air pollution:

- **Drive less.** Keep your vehicle's engine well maintained and tires inflated. Turn off your engine if you are stopped for more than one minute.
- **Share the trip.** Take the bus or carpool.
- **Bike or walk.** Identify whether the use of your automobile for errands can be avoided by postponing the trip or choosing to walk or bicycle.
- **Trip planning.** Plan ahead so that all of your errands for the day are completed in one trip.
- **Pack a lunch,** walk to a nearby restaurant or order in.
- **Teleconference.** Reschedule meetings so that they are conducted by teleconference.
- **Telecommute.** Utilize telecommuting if allowed by your employer.
- **Postpone lawn mowing with gasoline-operated equipment.**
- **Postpone indoor and outdoor paint jobs.**
- **Gasoline refueling.** Postpone vehicle refueling until the early evening hours.
- **Avoid using aerosol spray cans.**
- **Barbecues.** Instead of using lighter fluid, use a chimney starter.
- **Conserve electricity.**

Founded in 1967, the mission of the Southwest Clean Air Agency is to preserve and enhance the air quality in Southwest Washington. Serving the counties of Clark, Cowlitz, Lewis, Skamania and Wahkiakum, the SWCAA is responsible for enforcing federal, state and local air quality standards and regulations. For more information about the SWCAA, call (360) 574-3058, ext. 39 or, visit the SWCAA online at www.swcleanair.org.