



# County of Rockland Department of Health NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**DATE: September 3, 2008**  
**Contact: Gregory Price 364-2608**

## **AIR QUALITY HEALTH ADVISORY ISSUED FOR THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2008**

POMONA, NY – Rockland County Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Joan H. Facelle is alerting residents that an Air Quality Health Advisory for the Metropolitan New York City region, including Rockland County, has been issued for September 4, 2008. Air Quality Health Advisories are issued by the New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH) and Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) when levels of pollution, either ozone or fine particulate matter, are expected to exceed national air quality standards.

The pollutant of concern for the Air Quality Health Advisory is ozone.

The Rockland County Department of Health recommends that residents limit strenuous outdoor physical activity, such as jogging, ball-playing and running during the afternoon and early evening hours when ozone levels are highest. People with existing respiratory ailments may be especially sensitive to the effects of ozone and should limit all outdoor exercise and physical exertion when ozone levels are elevated. Young children and elderly persons are also susceptible. It is helpful to remain in an air-conditioned location. People exposed to elevated levels of ozone may experience a variety of symptoms. The most common symptom is a feeling of irritation in the eyes, nose and throat. Some people may also experience respiratory symptoms such as shortness of breath, chest pain, and wheezing. Even without such symptoms, people exposed to ozone may have changes in their lung function that can last for several days before returning to normal. Some people experience these effects as "feeling tired" or "lacking energy." Individuals experiencing symptoms such as shortness of breath, chest pain or coughing should consult their doctor or seek medical attention immediately.

Whenever possible, try to limit outdoor activities during peak ozone hours. Schedule outdoor exercise or activities for the morning hours when ozone levels are generally lower. "Ozone levels are usually highest after noon and through early evening hours on hot, sunny days, and therefore this part of the day is the peak time for symptoms. Performing vigorous exercise outdoors such as running also makes a person more likely to experience symptoms from exposure to ozone," said Dr. Facelle, Rockland County Commissioner of Health.

In addition, driving, engine idling, and using gas-powered equipment like lawnmowers are some of the most polluting activities that we do every day, and can contribute to decreased air quality. Residents are reminded that idling any vehicle for longer than three minutes in Rockland County is not only a major source of air pollution – it is also against the law and subject to strict penalties, including fines up to \$1,000 and/or jail time.

Simple actions that help reduce pollution include:

- Combining necessary car trips and errands into a single trip, rather than separate trips
- Postponing unnecessary trips
- Stopping short of a full tank when fueling vehicles to avoid releasing gas fumes into the air
- Refueling vehicles in the early morning and evening hours when it is cooler outside
- Avoiding drive-through lines
- Taking advantage of commuter benefits or telecommuting programs offered by employers

"We encourage residents to take some simple steps to help prevent and reduce air pollution, such as leaving their cars at home and using public transportation or other alternatives instead," said County Executive C. Scott Vanderhoef.

Residents can call the County's Transit Information Center at (845) 364-3333, Monday through Friday from 9 am to 5 pm, to learn about transit options, or they can visit [www.rocklandgov.com](http://www.rocklandgov.com) and click on the bus. Residents can stay informed about current air quality conditions by calling the NYS DEC Air Quality Hotline at 1-800-535-1345, or by visiting their web site ([http://www.dec.ny.gov/cfm/x/xtapps/aqi/aqi\\_forecast.cfm](http://www.dec.ny.gov/cfm/x/xtapps/aqi/aqi_forecast.cfm)). Information is also available

AIR QUALITY HEALTH ADVISORY ISSUED FOR THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 2008

Page 2

by calling the NYS DOH Environmental Hotline at 1-800-458-1158, or by visiting their web site ([www.health.state.ny.us](http://www.health.state.ny.us)). Residents can also visit [www.cleanairny.org](http://www.cleanairny.org) for more useful tips and information.

###