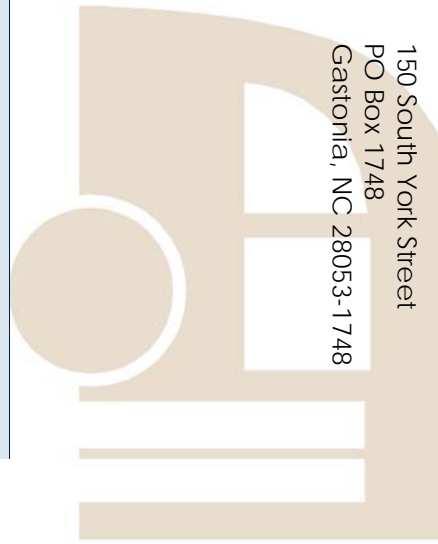


We're on the web!  
Visit [www.gastonmpo.org](http://www.gastonmpo.org)



150 South York Street  
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Gaston Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

# AIR QUALITY AWARENESS



## KNOW YOUR (AQI) COLORS !!!

Level of Concern	(AQI) Value	Meaning
Good (Green)	0-50	Air quality is considered satisfactory, and air pollution poses little or no risk.
Moderate (Yellow)	51-100	Air quality is acceptable; however, for some pollutants there may be a moderate health concern for a very small number of
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups (Orange)	101-150	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is not likely to be affected.
Unhealthy (Red)	151-200	Everyone may begin to experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
Very Unhealthy (Purple)	201-300	Health alert: everyone may experience more serious health effects.
Hazardous (Maroon)	> 300	Health warnings of emergency conditions. The entire population is more likely to be affected.

### Every Day tips to reduce pollution:

- ◇ Conserve energy: at home, at work, everywhere.
- ◇ Refuel carefully: avoid spilling fuel and don't top off.
- ◇ Keep car, boat, and other engines tuned up.
- ◇ Keep tires properly inflated and wheels aligned.
- ◇ Carpool, use public transportation, bike, or walk whenever possible.
- ◇ Use environmentally safe paints and cleaning products whenever possible.

### High Ozone Day tips to reduce pollution:

- ◇ Conserve electricity and set air conditioners to 78 degrees.
- ◇ Share a ride to work or use public transportation. Bicycle or walk when possible.
- ◇ If you must drive, use your newest car or truck because newer vehicles pollute less.
- ◇ Drive smart: combine errands, reduce trips, and limit idling.
- ◇ Take your lunch or walk to a nearby restaurant.
- ◇ Avoid using oil and solvent based paints, degreasers, or lighter fluid.
- ◇ Refuel Cars and mow lawns after 6:00 p.m.

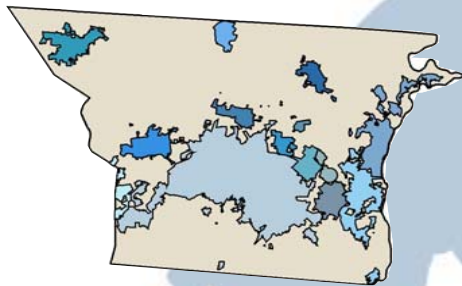
**Thank you for helping to make our community a healthier place to live, work, and play!!**

Source: North Carolina Dept. of Environmental and Natural Resources Division of Air Quality

# WHAT IS THE GASTON MPO?

The Gaston Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is a multi-jurisdictional body of twelve local governments, NCDOT, USDOT, and other providers of transportation services. The Gaston MPO currently comprises the following member governments:

**Belmont • Bessemer City • Cramerton  
Dallas • Gaston County • Gastonia  
Lowell • McAdenville • Mount Holly  
Ranlo • Spencer Mountain • Stanley**



## WHAT IS AIR QUALITY INDEX (AQI)?

The purpose of the AQI is to help citizens understand what local air quality means to your health. To make it easier to understand, the AQI is divided into six categories, with each category corresponding to a different level of health concern.

### AIR QUALITY INDEX (AQI) SIGNS

**Ozone Awareness** season lasts from the beginning of May until mid fall. Our local air quality significantly affects our quality of life in terms of how we all



Air quality sign located at Garrison Blvd.

breathe and ultimately live. To educate the general public and promote ozone awareness, the Gaston MPO placed Air Quality signs throughout the City of Gastonia. The signs are currently located at all municipal Fire Stations, the cities Police Department building, Gastonia City Hall, and various parks and recreation facilities, just to name a few.

### AIR QUALITY INDEX (AQI) FLAGS

In addition to the air quality index signs, the Gaston MPO has also purchased sets of both orange and red flags, plus two mounting brackets for each set to be flown on high ozone alert days. The flags are currently being flown at the Gaston County Cooperative Extensions Office, American & Efirid in Mt. Holly, Gaston County Solid Waste and Recycling, and at Gaston College (Lincoln Campus). The Gaston MPO would like to further this program and is in need of both public and private agencies with available flag poles to get more flags flying. If you are interested in participating please contact a Gaston MPO staff member.

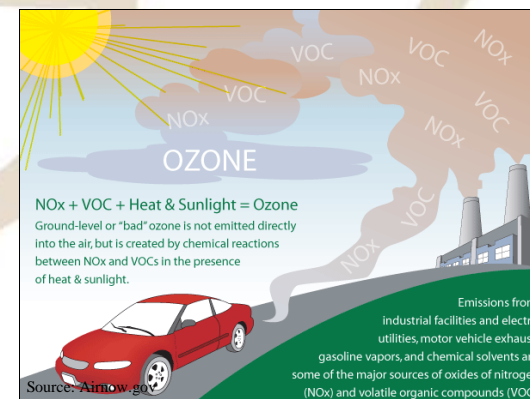
## NON-ATTAINMENT AREA

Gaston County is currently an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designated non-attainment area for ozone. This means that ozone pollution levels persistently exceed the national air quality standards. The designations process plays an important role in letting the public know whether air quality in a given area is healthy or not. Help improve our quality of life by following the tips on the back of the brochure to help improve our region's air quality.

## WHAT IS OZONE?

Ozone is a gas composed of three oxygen atoms. Ozone occurs both in the Earth's upper and ground level atmospheres. Ozone can be good or bad, depending on where it is found:

- ◇ **Good Ozone.** Ozone occurs naturally in the Earth's upper atmosphere 6—30 miles above the Earth's surface where it forms a protective layer that shields us from the sun's harmful ultraviolet rays. This beneficial ozone is gradually being destroyed by manmade chemicals.
- ◇ **Bad Ozone.** In the Earth's lower atmosphere, near ground level, harmful ozone is formed when pollutants emitted by cars, power plants, industrial boilers, refineries, chemical plants, and other sources react chemically in the presence of sunlight.



## HEALTH EFFECTS

- ◇ During physical activity, ozone penetrates deeper into parts of the lungs that are more vulnerable to injury
- ◇ Ozone can irritate the respiratory system, causing coughing, throat irritation, and/or an uncomfortable sensation in the chest.
- ◇ Ozone can reduce lung function and make it more difficult to breathe deeply and vigorously.
- ◇ Ozone can aggravate asthma. When ozone levels are high, more people with asthma have attacks that require a doctor's attention or use of medication.
- ◇ Ozone can increase susceptibility to respiratory infections.
- ◇ Ozone can inflame and damage the lining of the lungs. Within a few days, the damaged cells are shed and replaced similar to skin peeling after a sunburn.

## PEOPLE AT RISK

- ◇ Active children who spend a large amount of time outdoors in the summer time.
- ◇ People of all ages who are active outdoors.
- ◇ Healthy individuals who are unusually sensitive to ozone.
- ◇ People with respiratory illness.

## GASTON MPO STAFF

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Gaston MPO Staff at 704.866.6837 or by fax at 704.869.1960. Also visit us online at

[www.gastonmpo.org](http://www.gastonmpo.org)

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