



ON THE

AIR

SPRING
2005

A Newsletter about
Clean Air. Provided
by Spokane County
Air Pollution
Control Authority
(SCAPCA)

Clean Air Lawn Care . . . *it starts in your own backyard*

by *Natasha Seidl, Communications Intern*

For some, spring and summer gardening is an event anticipated all winter long; for the rest of us, it's weekend labor that can't go ignored for too long. And, none of us can ignore the fact that lawn and garden equipment shares a large portion of the responsibility for our summer air pollution--mainly ground level ozone (smog). Ozone pollution is formed when Volatile Organic Compounds, found in gasoline vapors, react in the presence of sunlight. So, those sunny days of summer we love, do have a downside when it comes to our air.

While many of us don't think of garden equipment as an air pollution source, the small gas-powered engines in lawn mowers, leaf blowers and weed wackers are actually a significant cause of air pollution. A gasoline-powered mower pollutes as much in an hour as 40 late model cars.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates there are 89 million lawn and garden equipment pieces in the country. Gas-powered equipment, such as lawn mowers, emits high levels of carbon monoxide, VOCs and nitrogen oxides, creating up to 5% of the country's air pollution.

Each weekend about 54 million Americans mow their lawns with gas powered mowers and by doing so, consume 800 million gallons of gas per year and produce masses of air pollutants. In fact, a typical 3.5 horsepower gas mower can release the same quantity of VOCs, precursors to smog, in an hour as a new car driven 340 miles.

Besides the environmental damage gas powered mowers are responsible for, they emit significant noise levels.

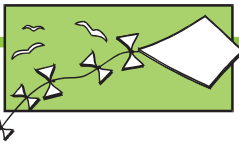
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Mow Better!

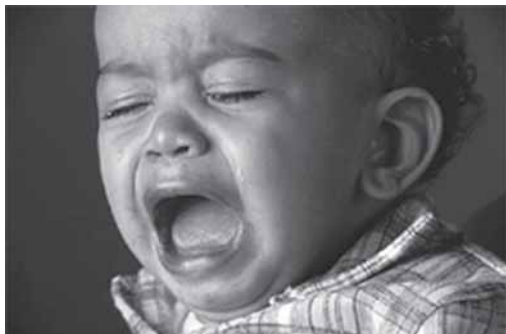
You can keep your yard looking beautiful without sacrificing the air. Here's how:

- ❖ Consider exchanging your old gas-powered lawn mower for an electric mower. The new cordless mulching mowers have the horsepower and run-time to cut up to a 1/2 acre lot on a single charge. Cordless electric mowers are gaining popularity for their ease of starting, lack of smell and noise, and the convenience of not handling or storing oil and gasoline.
- ❖ Or, try a people-powered reel (push) mower. Push mowers today are much lighter-weight than those of our grandparents' generation. They are ideal for small lawns, and they are quiet and store easily.
- ❖ If you must use a gas-powered mower, here are some tips to reduce your impact on our environment:
 - ✓ Reduce your "green" grass lawn area with other landscaping, including native plants, grasses, etc.
 - ✓ Hold off mowing on days when air pollution could be a problem (typically hot, calm, sunny days with temperatures in the 90s).
 - ✓ Mow during the late afternoon or early evening hours. This keeps ozone-forming pollutants out of the air during the daytime hours when ozone pollution is forming.
 - ✓ When refueling the mower, avoid spilling. Keep all gas containers firmly closed.

For more information on environmentally-friendly lawn and garden equipment, we found this helpful website:
www.cleanairgardening.com/electricmowers.html.



More Than 70 Percent Could Better Manage Asthma Triggers, EPA Survey Finds



In the first national awareness survey on environmental asthma triggers, EPA has found that fewer than 30 percent of people with asthma are taking simple steps to reduce exposure to asthma triggers. Exposure to asthma triggers such as secondhand smoke, cockroaches, dust mites, mold, and ozone (smog) pollution can cause asthma in young children or set off asthma attacks.

“The more we know about controlling and avoiding asthma triggers, the more we can prevent asthma and asthma attacks,” EPA Administrator Steve Johnson said. “That’s why EPA is raising awareness and encouraging those with asthma to work with their physicians to identify their asthma triggers and to follow EPA’s recommendations to reduce their exposure.”

EPA has launched a national asthma awareness media campaign, in partnership with the Ad Council. Television, radio, newspaper and outdoor public service announcements highlight sources of environmental asthma, triggers and simple steps parents can take to reduce their children’s exposure.

EPA has also released their Asthma Research Results Highlights Report that summarizes accomplishments in asthma research over the last five years and outlines future directions in asthma research.

Asthma research by EPA and collaborators on the causes and triggers of the disease and best practices for management of the disease is providing critical science information to address this growing health threat.

Of the approximately 20 million Americans with asthma, more than six million are children. The disease remains one of the leading causes of emergency room visits and school absenteeism for children. Although there is no known cure for asthma, there are ways to reduce the number of attacks, including avoiding exposure to environmental asthma triggers at home, school and other places where children spend their time.

The new PSAs encourage parents to call 1-866-NOATTACKS or visit <http://www.noattacks.org> for more information on preventing asthma attacks. The American Lung Association of Washington is another good resource (www.alaw.org).

For more information on EPA’s asthma research, visit www.epa.gov/ord/asthma.

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Clean Air Lawn Care

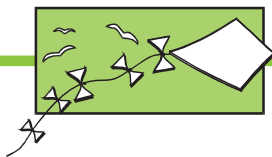
According to industry experts, gas mowers put out nearly 90 decibels, enough to advise precautions like ear protection. Because lawn mowers are used mostly in spring and summer months, when ground-level ozone is at its highest, their emissions worsen respiratory conditions and can cause breathing problems for people with asthma.

It’s more than a passing Eco-fad.

Environmentally safe lawn care is now the law. Since 1995, the EPA requires manufacturers to produce engines that are about 30% cleaner. The EPA mandates that manufacturers obtain EPA certification before selling engines in the U.S. By the year 2020, the EPA expects a 32% reduction in VOC emissions and a 7% reduction in carbon monoxide emissions from the new supply of engines.



Black & Decker Cordless Mower provides the freedom of a gas mower with the convenience of an electric mower. It’s simple to start and requires no gas, oil or tune-ups. It’s ideal for lawn areas typical of up to a 1/3 acre homesite.



Drought Conditions & Air Quality

In early March, a statewide drought emergency was issued, meaning we can count on an exceptionally dry summer, affecting everyone and everything from farmers and manufacturers to orchards and salmon. State officials and scientists predict conditions this summer will be even more severe than the drought of 2001.

A National Problem

In a nation where we have running water at what seems like the snap of a finger, we can easily forget that our water sources are not limitless. Many policymakers and expert officials are signaling a red flag that if the U.S. continues to go at its current rate in water consumption, we will face a critical water shortage within the next ten years. According to the EPA, the average American uses 90 gallons of water a day, compared to a European, who uses 53 gallons. Major threats to our water supply are population growth, overuse of water, pollution and drought.

Drought Conditions could impact our air quality

The drought this summer will not make conditions any better for air quality either. Air pollution, especially in Eastern Washington, is expected to rise as dry conditions contribute to wildfires and blowing dust.

Dust emissions come from a variety of activities, such as land clearing, construction and farming. Also, storing and hauling gravel, topsoil and other materials contributes to dust pollution.

Wildfires and Smoke

Increased risk of wildfires is another consequence of drought. Low snow-

pack and dry forests and range lands could mean an early start to the fire season. Smoke from a fire can travel rapidly, affecting air quality in areas hundreds of miles downwind.

Your Health

The Washington State Department of Ecology says that the air quality consequences of drought, although less evident, are critical to our health. Dust and smoke contain tiny particles that can get trapped inside the lungs and scratch and scar fragile air sacs. Further, with rainfall currently at less than half the normal level, the dust will aggravate asthma, emphysema and chronic bronchitis. The increased concentrations of dust and smoke are especially harmful to elderly people, children and people with respiratory conditions.



If you have heart or lung disease, if you are an older adult, or if you have children, talk with your doctor about steps you should take to protect yourself. Talk with your doctor before fire season, so you'll know what to do in a smoky situation. Only your doctor can advise you about your specific health situation. SCAPCA monitors air quality and reports pollution levels using the Air Quality Index (AQI). The AQI is updated hourly and is available online at www.scapca.org, or by calling the 24-hour recording at 477-2571.

By Natasha Seidl, Communications Intern

Here's What You Can Do To Help

Air Quality Tips

- ❖ When driving, reduce your vehicle speed on dirt roads.
- ❖ If you're clearing land, do your work in phases to minimize dust.
- ❖ Before starting any recreational fires/camp/cook fires, check burning rules and fire hazard conditions.
- ❖ Always keep loads covered and avoid "dusty" activities when the weather is hot, dry and windy.

Water Saving Tips

- ❖ Run the dishwasher only when it's full. This saves 10 - 20 gallons of water a day. When hand washing dishes, fill the sink with water instead of running the faucet.
- ❖ Turn off the faucet when brushing teeth or shaving.
- ❖ Up to 150 gallons of water is saved when turning off the hose while washing your car between rinses. Also, wash your car on the lawn to avoid wasting water.

◆ AIR QUALITY CALENDAR ◆

Take Note!

- May 21: Asthma Walk, sponsored by the American Lung Association of Washington. For information about Spokane's walk, call ALAW at 325-6516.
- June 2: SCAPCA monthly Board of Directors meeting, 9 a.m., lower level, Spokane County Public Works Building, 1022 W. Broadway. Meeting agendas are available online at www.scapca.org, or by calling 477-4727.
- July 7: SCAPCA monthly Board of Directors meeting (see information above)

On the Air is a quarterly publication of the Spokane County Air Pollution Control Authority. Its purpose is to educate local citizens on all aspects of outdoor air pollution.

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Did you know that only 39% of all trips that are less than half-a-mile are made on foot? That means we're making some very short car trips. Well, with summer on its way, we should park the car and get moving! Walking is a surefire way to get in shape, reduce stress and traffic, and save money

on gas and parking. And, you'll also be helping our air quality, since short car trips are the least-efficient and cause more pollution per mile than a longer car trip. Have we convinced you yet? Here's more:

Health experts agree that moderate physical activity for 10 minutes at a time, three times each day, five days each week, has long lasting health benefits. Squeezing this into a busy schedule may sound impossible. One way to help is to incorporate walking into your daily routine -- for those shorter trips, like to school, the bus stop, work, etc. Guaranteed you'll notice the rewards, physically and mentally.

There is no argument about it, walking is good for you. Here is a list of the many health benefits of walking you may not have known:

- Reduces the risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, and colon cancer
- Lowers blood pressure and reduces body cholesterol and body fat
- Enhances mental well being, and helps control weight
- Increases bone density, helping to prevent osteoporosis

So, consider your walking possibilities before you grab those car keys and head out the door this summer! It all adds up to cleaner air!

By Natasha Seidl, Communications Intern

