

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Eastern Panhandle Ozone Season Ends With Improved Results

Martinsburg, WV: The Eastern Panhandle's 2008 ozone season ended on September 30, 2008. This year's air quality for ozone pollution continued to improve from previous years, even with the EPA's more stringent standards.

In 2002, the Eastern Panhandle was in violation of the EPA's standards for ground level ozone pollution. When the EPA designated the Eastern Panhandle to be in compliance with ozone standards on April 15, 2008, they also lowered the ozone standard from 80 parts per billion (ppb) to 75 ppb. The new standards are needed to better protect the health of our citizens and the environment.

During the 2006 and 2007 ozone seasons, the Eastern Panhandle experienced one air quality alert per season. Under the new EPA standard, the Eastern Panhandle still experienced only one air quality alert during the 2008 ozone season. This is in contrast to having up to six air quality alerts per season prior to establishing the local air quality program in 2004.

By reducing ozone pollution, Jefferson and Berkeley Counties are bringing sustainable health and environmental improvements to local residents.

The Region 9 Planning and Development Council would like to thank the local elected officials and staff members in Berkeley County, Jefferson County and the City of Martinsburg, the Berkeley County Development Authority, the Jefferson County Development Authority, the Air Quality Program task force, local businesses, local schools, the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection and local citizens for their support of this program. The success of this program was achieved as a group effort. As the population continues to grow in the Eastern Panhandle, the program will continue to work towards reducing air pollution in the region.