

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**May 20, 2005**

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**Winchester and Frederick County to Begin Receiving Daily  
Air Quality Forecasts for Ground-Level Ozone in 2005**

**WINCHESTER, VA** - This year marks the beginning of daily seasonal air quality forecasting and reporting in the City of Winchester and Frederick County in Virginia. The summer ozone season runs from May 1 through September 30.

Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) will issue daily air quality forecasts for Winchester and Frederick County each afternoon. A prediction of unhealthy levels of ground-level ozone in the area signifies an "Air Quality Action Day" (AQAD). On an AQAD, DEQ forecasts will precede another air quality alert, which will be distributed to the media through the local air quality outreach program *Valley AIRNow*. Forecasts may also be found on the *Valley AIRNow* site at [www.valleyairnow.com](http://www.valleyairnow.com) or on the DEQ site at <http://www.deq.state.va.us/airquality/>. You may also request to receive DEQ daily air quality forecasts at [info@valleyairnow.com](mailto:info@valleyairnow.com).

Forecasts will be color-coded into four categories, with each color and category corresponding to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Air Quality Index (AQI). A Code Red forecast means ground-level ozone concentrations are predicted to be unhealthy while a Code Orange forecast indicates ozone pollution may be unhealthy for sensitive groups (e.g. those with asthma, bronchitis, emphysema). The other forecast categories include Code Green and Code Yellow, which mean ground-level ozone concentrations are predicted to be good and moderate, respectively.

Ground-level ozone is created in the lower atmosphere when common air pollutants called volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and nitrogen oxides (NOx) react in the presence of heat and sunlight. High concentrations of it near the ground's surface can be harmful to people, animals, and the environment. Ground-level ozone may originate from a variety of source emissions, including fumes from vehicles, boats, and lawn and garden equipment, as well as industrial facilities and many household products.

The *Valley AIRNow* Air Quality Outreach Program is a unique public education and outreach program developed by the Northern Shenandoah Valley Air Quality Improvement Task Force to help reduce air pollution. Their goal is to inform the public, through the media, about (1) the link between their lifestyle choices and air pollution, and (2) simple measures they can take to improve the overall air quality of the Northern Shenandoah Valley area, especially during days when air quality is expected to reach unhealthy levels.

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