

Why Refuel In the Afternoon?

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Ever wonder why SCDHEC recommends filling up your gas tank in the afternoon? The answer is simple: refueling later in the day reduces the air pollution impact associated with filling your tank. Here's why:

What is air pollution?

In South Carolina there are two air pollutants of main concern: ground-level ozone and particle pollution. Our refueling habits do not have an impact on the amount of particle pollution in the air, but they do contribute to ground-level ozone. Vapors that escape while fueling contain volatile organic compounds (VOCs), a component of ozone.

How are we affected?

When we breathe in ozone, it can inflame the lining of the airways and lungs. The most common symptoms of ozone exposure are feeling chest tightness, dry cough and difficulty breathing. Exposure to high ozone levels are particularly hazardous to children, the elderly and those with respiratory conditions such as asthma - but it can also cause breathing difficulties and reduced lung function in healthy adults.

Facts about ground-level ozone

- Ground-level ozone is not a primary pollutant, meaning it doesn't come directly from a source such as a smokestack or tailpipe. It is created when two primary pollutants - oxides of nitrogen (NO_x) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) - are "cooked" by sunlight and high temperatures.
- We are most likely to see high ozone levels during the hot spring and summer months.

So, why refuel later?

When you fill up, vapors escape into the air, adding VOCs to the ozone mixture. By waiting until later in the day, the escaping vapors contribute less to the chemical soup of pollutants that produces unhealthy concentrations of ozone.

For more information visit:
<http://www.scdhec.gov/ozone>.

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