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News Release

OZONE SEASON 2005 ENDS

San Antonio, October 31, 2005 – Today is the last day of the 2005 ozone season (April 1 to October 31 annually), the period when we expect to see higher levels of ozone than are typical during winter months. And 2005 is the first of three important years of record for ozone numbers. In spring of 2008, the EPA will again judge our region for compliance with federal clean air law. They'll be looking at an average taken over 2005, 2006, and 2007. The Federal ozone standard threshold was exceeded on October 17 for 2005.

The eight-hour average ozone reading of record this season is 86 parts per billion, recorded on October 17th. But the three-year permissible average must be below 85 parts per billion. "That means we'll have to do better over the next two years than we did this year," said AACOG Natural Resources Director Peter Bella. "If we don't show improved numbers in 2006 and 2007, I'd expect to see EPA declare us in violation of Federal law in early 2008." The area currently benefits from participation in an Early Action Compact, which allows us until 2008 before being judged again. In 2004, our readings exceeded permissible 8-hour ozone standard levels but our nonattainment status was deferred due to our EAC participation. A requirement for participation in the EAC was early implementation of local pollution reduction strategies.

According to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ), exposure to ground-level ozone can cause: shortness of breath; coughing; headaches and nausea; and throat and lung irritation. Ground-level ozone's effects are most profound on children, senior citizens, and those with respiratory conditions such as asthma or emphysema.

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