

The Open Forum Letters to the Editor

Colorado's air quality is getting better but room to improve

Re: "Ozone soars to 48% above federal limit," July 24 news story

I find this flap over ozone to be seriously faulty. I'm in San Luis valley, and we've had plenty of smoke from Oregon, Arizona, California and New Mexico. Those temporary events are not caused by people in Denver metro.

But that does not stop "regulators" from blaming city area residents, though obviously the source for the sudden spike is not local vehicle use, but smoke from other states, reported to have gone to East Coast as well.

Frankly, the entire fuss appears to be dishonest, as the real source — that all know — is being ignored, given minimal admissions of real cause. EPA has no right to downgrade Front Range because of awful fires far away. That's a misuse, maybe an abuse, of power. If Denver or state officials have any spine, they need to object loud and clear.

Margy Robertson, Monte Vista

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While Front Range ozone levels continually bear monitoring, can we do without the blatant enviro-alarmism of Denver Post writer Bruce Finley?

The story headline itself is flawed in that the federal ozone health limit of 70 parts per billion is an 8-hour average, not a momentary spike at a local monitoring station that would be 48% above 70 parts per billion. Also, the story focuses on Front Range ozone levels, not "Colorado."

It is noted that this year, average ozone levels at all 16 of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's air-quality measuring stations along the Front Range have topped 72 parts per billion. But this is a minuscule 2 ppb above the at-risk groups health limit of 70 ppb and hardly triggers dire warnings. Keep in mind the federal ozone health limit was once 80 ppb, then 75 ppb and now it's been lowered to a very strict 70 ppb by the EPA.

To put Front Range ozone levels into perspective, Denver recorded an all-time high 8-hour average of 310 ppb in 1972. Since the notorious brown cloud era, local officials have made tremendous progress toward controlling dangerous levels of air pollution through appropriate industrial regulations and vehicle emissions testing. Let's keep it that way, minus the over-the-top media alarmism.

Dave Larison, Longmont

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Bruce Finley's piece on the ozone issue for Colorado sheds light on the growing threat of ozone. There is another factor that receives little attention, mostly because the public is largely unaware of what exists in the skies above us — lead!

Lead was prohibited in paint in 1978 and from the gas in our cars in 1996. But there remains a significant source of lead in the skies above us: it is in the aviation gas that smaller, piston engine planes use. And, if you live anywhere near Rocky Mountain Metro Airport (RMMA), there is a huge source of this lead dust raining down on your home, schools, playgrounds and open space every day.

RMMA is owned and operated by Jefferson County, but the impact of this facility affects all of us. Tenants include five flight schools with nearly 200 piston engine planes flying overhead daily; the airport derives income from them and other small plane owners through the sale of leaded aviation gas.

RMMA increased overall flights between 2018 and 2020 by 11%. Flight schools burning lead gas account for hundreds of those flights every day. Now Jeffco is preparing to finalize a new master plan to grow its operations even more with a minimum of public input and without any study of the environmental impact this will have on the surrounding communities in Jefferson, Broomfield and Boulder counties. Even if the noise does not bother you, the air pollution and lead dust should be concerns for all.

Charlene Willey, Westminster