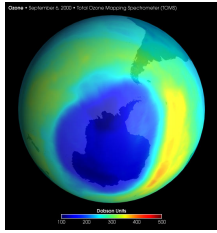


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By: Tudor Vieru, Science Editor



The hole in the ozone layer over the Antarctic is just a part of the overall ozone problem humans are faced with NASA

Ozone – the Silent Killer

Light and greenhouse gases generate more ozone each year

The deadly gas is formed when sunlight hits various gases in the atmosphere, usually generated by human activities. The ever-increasing levels of pollution in major cities cause for larger quantities of ozone to be generated all the time. While the ozone layer in the upper atmosphere protects our planet against UV light and cosmic radiation, the gas forming on street levels is extremely dangerous to people and can cause severe damage to extended populations in affected areas.

The presence of the gas has increased by nearly 15 percent in the U.K. alone, between 1980 and 2008, a new Royal Society survey finds. As a direct result, more than 1,500 people are believed to have died from ozone intoxication in 2003. The study predicts that these numbers will increase substantially, by as much as 51 percent, by 2020. This means that some 2,400 will die yearly by that time. Age and medical conditions are the two factors that determine how prone to die because of ozone people are.

Patients suffering from asthma are at a very high risk of developing afflictions related to the lungs, eyes and nose, the main symptoms ozone intoxication has. This is especially true on very warm and stagnant days in large cities, when traffic jams and intense heat form more of the gas and subject people to increased risks. Children and the elderly are also in danger, as their immune systems are not yet fully formed or have begun degenerating, respectively.

The bad news about this gas is that it cannot be managed locally, meaning that regional or even national measures have little to no effect on the issue. In order for this risk to be averted, the issue of global warming and climate change must be addressed on a worldwide level. For cities, [solutions](#) already exist, but factories and electrical plants using fossil fuels need to be replaced with non-polluting means of production as soon as possible.