

The Ozone Layer

Further information:

Environmental Protection Authority
1 Mount Street,
Perth, W.A. 6000
(09) 222 7000

And
What Can **You** Do To Help
Protect It

What Is The Ozone Layer?

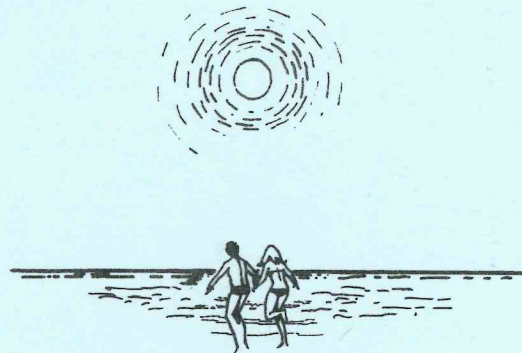
About 20 to 30 km above the earth's surface in the stratosphere is a layer of air rich in ozone (a sort of oxygen with 3 atoms per molecule instead of the normal 2).

This ozone layer blocks out much of the ultra violet radiation from the sun. Life on earth has developed under this natural sunscreen. If it is removed the effects could be severe. We know for instance that skin cancer in humans would increase dramatically.

Why Does It Need Protecting?

As far as we know, the amount of ozone in the layer has been constant for a long time, kept in balance by natural chemical reactions in the atmosphere.

Recent measurements suggest the ozone concentration is falling - the culprit appears to be chlorofluorocarbons, sometimes called freons.



Chlorofluorocarbons - The Culprit

Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) are a group of chemicals which have become very useful in modern society. Their properties make them ideal refrigerants, propellants in pressure paks, and for the manufacture of foaming plastics.

One of the useful properties of CFCs is that they do not react chemically with other materials - the plastics, the contents of pressure paks or the working parts of refrigerators. Released to the atmosphere CFCs do not break down **until** they come in contact with ozone - **then** they react with the ozone, turning it into ordinary oxygen, which does not act as an ultraviolet filter.

What The Government Is Doing

The Western Australian Government is supporting the Australian Government in an international effort to reduce the manufacture of CFCs through a United Nation's convention requiring a 50% reduction by 1999.

What You Can Do To Help

Regardless of what Governments can do to reduce CFC manufacture - it is you, the consumer, who has the greatest say in what is sold and used.

"Pressure paks" have proliferated over the years to be used for many purposes where alternatives are available. Refuse to buy products in CFC propelled pressure cans. Use roll-on deodorants and insect repellants; use a lotion, creme or pump spray for hair styling and tell your hairdresser to do the same; buy your perfume in a bottle of pump spray; if you think a pressure can is essential, check the can and buy a brand which uses a hydrocarbon propellant; avoid products packaged in plastic foam; complain to your store manager about foam-packed meat, fruit and vegetable trays; don't regas your car air conditioner unless it really needs it and have it checked for leaks and repaired first; if your fridge or air conditioner needs more gas it has **leaked** - insist the leak is repaired before regassing.

Avoid

Products packaged in foam plastic eg. meat and vegetable trays, fast food containers, "disposable" foam drink cups (unless they are CFC free) and pressure cans propelled by CFCs.

Use

roll-on deodorant and insect repellent, creme or pump spray for styling hair, pump spray perfume or dab on; hydrocarbon pressure cans only.

Don't

get your car air conditioner regassed till it really needs it.

Insist

on repairs to leaky fridge or air conditioner.

Tell

your hairdresser and store managers about pressure cans and plastic foam products.