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Temps to cool and rain possible this weekend

By Jennifer Crossley Howard

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ANDERSON — Today marks the start of fall and also brings increased chances of smog. It may start to feel like autumn once summer-like temperatures begin to fade Sunday.

The cooling is expected to continue through next week.

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control refers to today as an air-quality action day, meaning increased chance of smog or ground-level ozone. Today's ground-level ozone alert includes Anderson, Abbeville, Cherokee, Greenville, Greenwood, Laurens, Oconee, Pickens, Spartanburg and Union counties. Most ozone alerts occur in mid summer, not at the beginning of fall, said Adam Myrick, public information director at the health department.

"The air mass become static because there's just not a lot of movement," he said.

The Upstate has the highest ground-level ozone forecast today in the state at 101, classified as unhealthy for people with respiratory diseases such as asthma.

"We also would advise avoiding any excessive vehicle idling while you're waiting for your kids or at any extracurricular activities," Myrick said. He also recommends carpooling and staying inside at lunch.

A ridge of high pressure lingering over the Upstate for days has resulted in the warm temperatures, said Blair Holloway, meteorologist at National Weather Service in Greer.

"It's not uncommon for this time of year. Typically this is a quiet, dry time of year," he said.

Highs today will reach 90, Thursday temperatures will go up one degree to 91, and Friday and Saturday reach 89. The drop starts Sunday with the high reaching only 81.

A small chance of rain is expected Saturday night, but Holloway said it's too early to give the odds.

Highs next week are forecast for the 70s and 80s — a departure from the early 90s this week. Today's temperature will be about 10 degrees above the trend of the past two years. In 2009 Anderson Regional Airport reached a high of 83 for the day, and in 2008 the high was 82.

If the La Nina cool weather pattern in the Pacific Ocean continues it could cause October, November and December to be drier than usual. La Nina often results in dry weather on the East Coast in the fall.

Dry conditions have caused lake levels to fall in the past two weeks. Hartwell Lake dropped one foot to 655 feet. Lake Jocassee dropped almost three feet to 93 feet, 7 feet below target, and Lake Keowee actually rose .2 feet, still 4 feet below target.



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