Baton Rouge ozone levels hit unhealthy range again

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A shift in the wind Tuesday afternoon caused ozone pollution levels in the Baton Rouge area to rise into the unhealthy range for about one hour, a spokesman for the Department of Environmental Quality said.

The highest recorded reading was 113 parts-per-billion in Port Allen.

Gus Von Bodungen, the administrator of the Air Quality Division for DEQ, said winds that were moving from west to east all morning switched around noon.

"The same air passed over the instruments twice and the reactions kept continuing," he said.

Ozone is caused by emissions from automobiles and industry and, to a lesser extent, natural sources. When heated by sunlight, the emissions form ozone that can irritate the lungs.

Ozone levels in other areas reached the moderate level, with readings of 94 ppb at LSU, 90 ppb at the Capitol and 62 ppb in Baker. Von Bodungen does not expect high ozone levels on Wednesday because of the change in the weather.

"The rainy weather has moved in," he said. There will be "more wind, more cloud cover and more ventilation," he said.

Children, the elderly and those with respiratory problems are most likely to be affected, though high ozone levels also can affect young, healthy adults. Often physical problems can be lessened by decreased physical activity outdoors.