Lafayette’s air quality critique
a first for area

Claire Taylor
c.taylor@theadvertiser.com

For the first time, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality on Thursday warned that Lafayettes air quality could reach levels considered unhealthy for sensitive persons, and the same is forecast for today.

“It’s never happened before in Lafayette,” Department of Environmental Quality spokeswoman Jean Kelly said. “It’s not because the air is any worse than it was last year at this time. They lowered the standard.”

A statement issued by the DEQ for Lafayette and St. Martin parishes warned that ozone levels Thursday and today could become unhealthy. Driving less can help keep ozone levels down.

See WARNING on Page 6A
Warning

were expected to be unhealthy for the elderly, very young children and anyone with respiratory problems such as asthma and emphysema.

Sensitive people are advised to avoid prolonged outdoor activities and exertion during the warning period.

Everyone can help keep ozone levels down by driving less, refueling vehicles after 6 p.m. and mowing their lawns after 6 p.m., Kelly said.

Since Lafayette doesn't have a lot of big industries like Baton Rouge that can implement plans to cut back emissions, it's up to every person to change their behavior a little to help, she said.

"Those are little things people can do that can add up," said Jennifer Mouton, DEQ environmental scientist.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency recently reviewed data and as a result lowered the level at which ozone should be present at ground level, Mouton said.

The clear skies, sunny conditions and lack of wind helped to bring ozone levels up this week, she said.

Good ozone is present in the atmosphere and shields the Earth. When ozone occurs at ground level, at breathing zones, it becomes an irritant, Mouton said.

Ozone at ground level is formed when certain volatile organic compounds, in the presence of sunlight, react with nitrogen oxides and create a chemical reaction, she said.