

What Is An Air Pollution Model?

- A computer model simulates the meteorological conditions and chemical reactions that govern air pollution formation and transport.

Why Do We Need Air Pollution Models?

- Winter pollution is formed when gaseous emissions from cars, industry, and residential sources react in the air to form particulate pollution. Dust is not a large contributor.
- Utah's complex mountain-valley meteorology plays a large role in the build-up of particulate pollution.
- Without a model only simple broad brush emission strategies are possible and outcomes are less certain.



Image Credit: Time-Science.com

How Are Air Pollution Models Used?

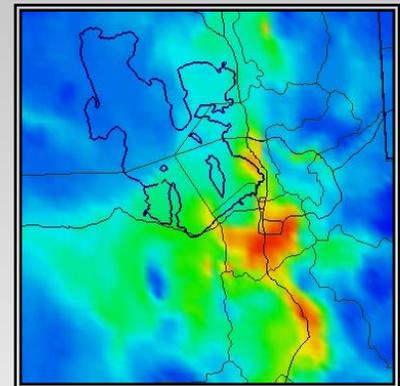
- Test the effects of emission reductions on air pollution.
- Identify the most effective cost-benefit emission strategies.
- Provide quantitative basis for decision makers.



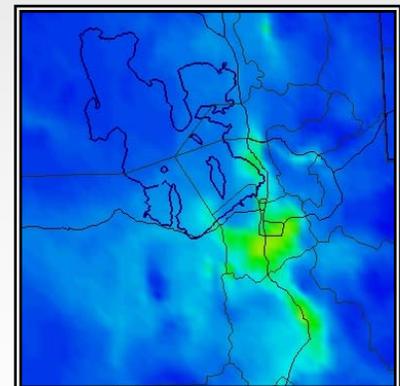
Image Credit: Time-Science.com

Can We Believe The Model?

- All models of complex systems have uncertainties, but they are the best tools available.
- The model is **The Tool** for determining how to clean Utah's air.



Modeled Air Pollution Now



With Emission Reductions



PM_{2.5} SIP Modeling Process: Details

Step 1:

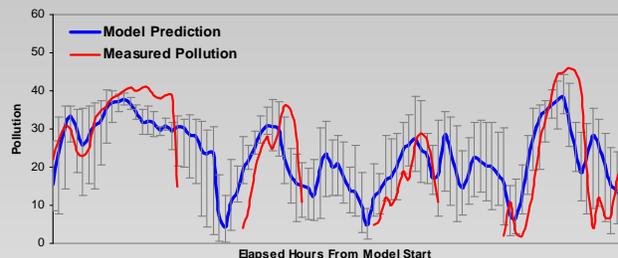
- Meteorological modeling is performed to provide input to the chemistry model.
- Meteorological modeling for the PM_{2.5}¹ SIP² is provided by scientists with the Department of Army Dugway Proving Ground and the National Center for Atmospheric Research.
- Modeling area is divided into 4 kilometer by 4 kilometer “grid cells” in order to represent the variations in meteorology that occur from location to location.

Step 2:

- The meteorological-chemistry model³ is run using current emissions inventory and tested against several recent historical pollution episodes⁴.
- Results are compared to observed pollution concentrations to determine if the model is accurate.

Step 3:

- Develop future emissions inventory⁵ based on projections of future year changes in population, industry, and automobile use.
- Use the meteorological-chemistry model with future year emission projections to predict future year pollution concentrations and compare concentrations to the Federal health standard.



Step 4:

- Develop emission strategies that the model demonstrates will reduce future year pollution concentrations below the Federal health standard.

1. PM_{2.5} – Particulate matter that is less than 2.5 microns in diameter.

2. SIP – State Implementation Plan: Required by EPA to demonstrate the air pollution levels in the future will meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standard.

3. Meteorological-Chemistry Model – Computer model(s) that contain all relevant thermodynamic, fluid dynamics, and chemical equations and are used to predict meteorology and chemistry in continuous fields across the applied area. Models used: WRF, MM5, CMAQ.

4. Historical Pollution Episode – Times in the recent past with strong winter inversions and high build-up of pollution levels, i.e. February 14-18, 2008.

5. Emissions Inventory Development - Methods used to calculate average pollution generated on an hourly basis by sources such as automobiles, large and small industries, and all other miscellaneous activities.



Utah Department of
Environmental Quality

For more information contact:
tcruickshank@utah.gov