

# Montreal Protocol

## One-Page Fact Sheet

### Background

- In the 1980s, scientists observed that the ozone layer was thinning over Antarctica. People began thinking of this process as an “ozone hole.”
- The ozone layer blocks harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation from reaching the Earth’s surface where it can harm people and ecosystems.
- In response, leaders from many countries came together in 1987 to sign the *Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer*.

### Current Issues

- Today, more than 191 countries have signed the Montreal Protocol and the treaty has been very successful. The U.S. has already phased out most of the substances with the greatest potential to deplete the ozone layer with flexible and innovative strategies.
  - EPA is responsible for controlling chemicals that deplete the ozone layer. The U.S. has met all of its phase-out commitments with the help of many partners.
  - EPA has approved more than 300 alternatives to ozone-depleting substances for many industrial, commercial, and consumer uses.
- Many of these new technologies also save energy and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.
- The year 2007 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Montreal Protocol. EPA and other organizations are planning activities to commemorate the important achievements of the people and programs that work to protect the Earth’s ozone layer.

### The Future

- The ozone layer has not grown thinner since 1998, but will not return to normal levels until about 2075. Sustaining the recovery of the ozone layer in the future will require a worldwide phase-out of ozone-depleting substances.
- To continue the recovery of the ozone layer, EPA plans to:
  - Complete the phase-out of ozone-depleting substances;
  - Foster domestic and international partnerships to protect the ozone layer; and
  - Encourage the development of products, technologies, and initiatives that have co-benefits in climate change and energy efficiency.
- In addition, while the ozone layer is under repair, EPA plans to continue to educate the public about UV protection.