

# International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer | Earth 911

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People think of the ozone layer as a past-tense environmental issue. The thinning of the ozone layer near the Antarctic was one of the biggest environmental topics of the 1980s. But the widespread adoption of the 1987 [Montreal Protocol](#) established a timetable for phasing out nearly 100 [ozone-depleting chemicals](#).

Implementation of the Montreal Protocol had measurable results. The concentration of long-lived CFCs in the environment began to drop over time, with a corresponding [20% decrease](#) in seasonal ozone depletion from 2005 to 2016. But challenges remain.

## International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer

In 1994, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed September 16 the [International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer](#), commemorating the date of the signing of the Montreal Protocol. The observation day helped to promote the Montreal Protocol until 2009, when the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol became the first treaties in the history of the United Nations to achieve universal ratification.

But there was still work to do. The initial timeline focused on eliminating CFCs and halons, which have the highest ozone-depletion potential. In October 2016 in Kigali, Rwanda, the Montreal Protocol was amended to accelerate the elimination of HCFC and HFCs, which have been are still in use as transitional substitutes for CFCs.

## Continued Efforts

By all accounts, this is an environmental success story – proof that where there is a political will, human action can repair past environmental damage. However, the International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer is not just a day to celebrate past success. The day's slogan “Ozone for life” is a reminder not only that the ozone layer is critical for life on Earth, but also that we must continue to protect it.

In 2018, the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in Colorado [discovered increasing CFC levels](#) that pointed to new production of illegal CFCs at levels that could delay the repair of the ozone layer for a decade or longer. The efforts of [citizen scientists](#) tracked the emissions to unregistered factories in China. Treaties are only effective when they are enforced by signatories.

## Individual Efforts

Few of us are equipped to battle illegal factories. But we do have a role as consumers in eliminating ozone-depleting chemicals. The Trump administration refused to

participate in the Kigali Amendment, so hundreds of [consumer products](#) in the U.S. still use HFCs. In particular, HFC 152A is the propellant in hair spray, antiperspirants, disinfectants, and cleaning products. HFCs are less harmful to the ozone layer than CFCs, but they still have ozone-depleting potential. And they are also significant air pollutants that contribute to climate change.

Responsible consumers will read ingredient lists carefully and [recycle aerosol cans](#) carefully or avoid aerosol products entirely. Find out if your [refrigerator or air conditioner](#) uses HFCs as refrigerants. If it does, replace it with the most efficient HFC-free model you can afford. Be sure to [recycle your old unit](#) responsibly.

We've made a lot of progress protecting the ozone layer. But individuals still need to be alert and conscientious consumers to avoid ozone depletion.

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