

Particulate matter:

Particulate matter comes from a variety of sources, including coal-fired electric generating units. Science has shown that particulate matter is a complex mixture of many particle types, including sulfates, carbon compounds and others, and that further study is needed to determine which types have the most impact on health. Power plants that use coal release oxides of sulfur and nitrogen, which can change into sulfate and nitrate particles.

In the meantime, at Georgia Power we have reduced our emissions of SO₂ and NO_x, which contribute to levels of particulate matter in the air. By early next decade, we expect our SO₂ and NO_x emissions to be significantly below 2002 levels. We are also aggressively pursuing major research programs to bring better understanding to the role fine particulate matter — and its components — have in human health impacts.

Regional haze:

Regional haze describes the reduction in visibility because of hazy conditions in the atmosphere. The visibility reduction is caused by small particles — both natural and man-made — and certain gases. The most common haze-forming particles originating from pollutants are sulfates, nitrates and carbon-containing compounds, which come from many combustion sources, including power plants that use coal as a fuel.

These particles — especially the sulfates — can absorb water and become larger on days of high humidity, scattering light and creating hazy conditions. Georgia Power is well aware that our emissions contribute to regional haze and we remain committed to doing our part to address the haze issue in our region.