

## A Note on the Effect of Stratospheric Ozone Fluctuations on Mean Transmitted Ultraviolet

BRIAN MARTIN<sup>1</sup> AND CLINTON STEWART

*School of Physics, Sydney University, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia 2006*

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### ABSTRACT

Fluctuations in the atmospheric ozone column may significantly increase mean transmitted ultraviolet radiation at biologically sensitive wavelengths, and increase mean photodissociation rates in the lower stratosphere.

O'Brien (1971) and Donaldson and Hilst (1972) have studied the important retarding effects which inhomogeneities in reacting chemical species may have upon reaction rates. In this note we wish to point out a similar type of effect, namely that fluctuations in stratospheric ozone may lead to an increase in average transmitted ultraviolet radiation. This increase may be significant in calculating photodissociation rates or obtaining the effect of changes in the ozone column on the erythral response of exposed skin.

Consider first the oxygen photodissociation rate  $j_2$  at a height  $z$  in the atmosphere:

$$j_2 = \int Q_\lambda \sigma_{O_2, \lambda} \exp[-(\sigma_{O_2, \lambda} N_2 + \sigma_{O_3, \lambda} N_3) / \cos \phi] d\lambda. \quad (1)$$

Here  $\lambda$  is the wavelength;  $Q_\lambda$  is the number of photons in the ultraviolet incident at the top of the atmosphere

per unit area, per unit time, and per wavelength interval;  $\sigma_{O_2, \lambda}$  and  $\sigma_{O_3, \lambda}$  are the cross sections for absorption of radiation at wavelength  $\lambda$  by molecular oxygen and ozone, respectively;

$$N_2 = \int_z^\infty (O_2) dz \quad \text{and} \quad N_3 = \int_z^\infty (O_3) dz$$

are the columns of molecular oxygen and ozone; and  $\phi$  is the solar zenith angle. We do not consider absorbers of ultraviolet other than  $O_2$  and  $O_3$ .

If  $N_3$  varies with time,  $j_2$  will also vary; the average value of  $j_2$  will be increased because changes in the exponential in (1) will strongly weight increases in  $j_2$ . If the fluctuations in  $N_3$  are normally distributed with mean  $\langle N_3 \rangle$  (where the angle brackets indicate an average over fluctuations) and variance  $s_3^2$ , it is easily calculated that

$$\langle j_2(N_3) \rangle = j_2(\langle N_3 \rangle) \left( 1 + \frac{1}{2j_2(\langle N_3 \rangle)} \frac{\partial^2 j_2}{\partial N_3^2} s_3^2 \right), \quad (2)$$

where higher order derivatives of  $j_2$  have been neglected.

<sup>1</sup> Present affiliation: Center for Resource and Environmental Studies, The Australian National University, Canberra, A.C.T., Australia 2600.

Actually a more relevant quantity for many calculations is  $\langle J_2(N_3) \rangle$ , where  $J_2$  is the average of  $j_2$  over solar zenith angle. In Table 1 we present sample results [based on the solar fluxes and oxygen and ozone cross sections of Ackerman (1971)] for  $\frac{1}{2}J_2^{-1}\partial^2J_2/\partial N_3^2$ , and the corresponding quantity for the ozone photodissociation rate  $j_3$ .

The fractional increase in the mean photodissociation rates  $J_2$  and  $J_3$  may be found by multiplying the last two columns in Table 1 by  $s_\lambda^2/\langle N_3 \rangle^2$ , which is the variance of the ozone column measured in units of the mean column. This variance will be most sizeable in the lower stratosphere where transport effects predominate, and may range up to values of 0.1 or more, though smaller values are more typical (Dobson *et al.*, 1927; Craig, 1965; Dütsch, 1969, 1974).

In most ozone models, this effect of fluctuations on photodissociation rates is not taken into account. The latest general circulation models do incorporate them, but are forced to make severe approximations in averaging over the solar angle on taking into account UV absorption by oxygen (Cunnold *et al.*, 1975).

Consider now the biological efficiency of solar ultraviolet radiation for erythema or sunburn, averaged over a day:

$$S = \frac{1}{2\pi} \int_{\cos\phi > 0} \int Q_\lambda s_\lambda \exp[-\sigma_{O_3, \lambda} N_3 / \cos\phi] d\lambda dt, \quad (3)$$

where  $s_\lambda$  measures the relative sensitivity of the skin for erythema (Urbach, 1969). Another quantity of concern (see, for example, Bassett *et al.*, 1974), the effect

TABLE 1. Sample computations of effects of ozone fluctuations on  $J_2$  and  $J_3$ .

| Height<br>(km)       | $N_2$<br>( $10^{27} \text{ m}^{-2}$ ) | $\langle N_3 \rangle$<br>( $10^{22} \text{ m}^{-2}$ ) | $\frac{1}{2}J_2^{-1}\partial^2J_2/\partial N_3^2$ | $\frac{1}{2}J_3^{-1}\partial^2J_3/\partial N_3^2$ |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Equator, equinox     |                                       |   |   |   |
| 30                   | 0.53                                  | 1.0   | 0.86  | 0.48  |
| 25                   | 1.13                                  | 2.0   | 1.40  | 0.36  |
| 45°, winter solstice |                                       |   |   |   |
| 30                   | 0.53                                  | 0.5   | 1.25  | 0.43  |
| 30                   | 0.53                                  | 1.0   | 1.78  | 0.32  |
| 30                   | 0.53                                  | 2.0   | 3.73  | 0.21  |
| 25                   | 1.13                                  | 1.0   | 2.24  | 0.31  |
| 25                   | 1.13                                  | 2.0   | 4.07  | 0.21  |
| 25                   | 1.13                                  | 3.0   | 7.23  | 0.16  |

TABLE 2. Sample computations of effects of ozone fluctuations on  $S$  and  $S'$ .

|                       | $\langle N_3 \rangle$<br>( $10^{22} \text{ m}^{-2}$ ) | $\frac{1}{2}S^{-1}\partial^2S/\partial N_3^2$ | $\frac{1}{2}S'^{-1}\partial^2S'/\partial N_3^2$ |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|
| Equinox, 30°N         | 8.0   | 2.4   | 4.2   |
| Summer solstice, 30°N | 7.5   | 2.1   | 3.9   |
| Equinox, 45°N         | 9.3   | 3.0   | 4.9   |
| Summer solstice, 45°N | 8.5   | 2.4   | 4.2   |

of a change in the mean ozone level on  $S$ , is given by  $S' = \partial S / \partial N_3$ . The effect of fluctuations on  $S$  and  $S'$  is given by expressions directly analogous to (2). In Table 2 we list values for the quantities  $\frac{1}{2}S^{-1}\partial^2S/\partial N_3^2$  and  $\frac{1}{2}S'^{-1}\partial^2S'/\partial N_3^2$  at selected ozone columns, latitudes, and times of the year.

In summary, we find that fluctuations in the ozone column increase the mean flux of transmitted ultraviolet, and this may lead to increased photodissociation rates, and to a significant increase in the effect of changes in the mean ozone column on transmitted radiation at biologically sensitive wavelengths.

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