

ALERT! April 2012

ALERT! is a monthly update on transportation and air quality planning activities in the Delaware Valley.



Air Quality Regulations

EPA Finds that DVRPC Region Meets the 1997 Ozone Standards

On Monday, March 26, 2012, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published a "clean data determination" for the Philadelphia-Wilmington-Atlantic City Non-Attainment Area for the 1997, 8-hour Ozone Standard in the Federal Register. The clean data determination means that the Greater Philadelphia Region, including the nine counties in the DVRPC region, is meeting the 1997 ozone standard.

A clean data determination is different from a re-designation. The clean data determination declares that the region has demonstrated, through quality-controlled, and certified data, that the region is meeting the National Ambient Air Quality Standard for ozone but does not automatically re-designate the region as an attainment or maintenance area.

The clean data determination does suspend certain planning requirements for Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland, such as the requirements to submit state air quality implementation plan attainment demonstrations, as long as the region continues to meet the standard. This determination does not relieve the region from the requirement to demonstrate transportation conformity.

In the same Federal Register announcement as the clean data determination, EPA announced that the region met the 1997 ozone standards by the required attainment date of June 15, 2011. This finding is important because it means the region will not be reclassified for a failure to meet the standard by the applicable attainment date. A re-classification of the severity of a region's air quality conditions include additional planning and permitting requirements for the states in the region.

Designations of the non-attainment areas for the 2008 eight-hour ozone standard are anticipated to be released by the EPA in May 2012. The DVRPC region is expected to be designated as a moderate non-attainment area for the new ozone standard.

These findings, while technical in nature, are a positive sign that efforts to improve air quality in the region, and across the nation are working.



**Monday,
April 16, 2012
Philadelphia Diesel
Difference
Working Group
10:00 AM**

DVRPC Conference Center
8th Floor
6th and Race Streets
Philadelphia, PA

**Saturday,
April 21, 2012
Clean Air Council
5K Run for Clean Air**

MLK Drive (behind the
Philadelphia Museum of Art)

For More Information Visit:
www.cleanair.org



Health and Air Quality

Air Pollution from Trucks and Low-Quality Heating Oil May Explain Asthma Hot Spots

A new study from scientists at Columbia University indicates that that neighborhood differences in childhood asthma rates may be explained by varying levels of air pollution from trucks and residential heating oil.

The study findings, published in the *Journal of Exposure Science and Environmental Epidemiology*, showed that asthma rates among school age children in New York City range from a low of 3% to a high of 19% depending on the students' home neighborhood. The study notes that children living within walking distance of each other can have a two to three-fold difference in the risk for asthma.

Researchers reported that levels of airborne black carbon, which mostly comes from incomplete combustion sources such as diesel trucks and oil home heating furnaces, were high in homes of children suffering from asthma. Researchers also reported elevated levels of black carbon within homes in neighborhoods with high asthma prevalence; as well as high densities of diesel truck routes and homes burning low grade heating oil.

According to the researchers, the burning of low grade heating oil is especially prevalent in New York City because of its history as a shipping and refining center. The researchers feel that this study lends support to claims that stricter standards on emissions from trucking and heating oil are necessary to protect human health.

For more information on this research, please visit:

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/03/120327124806.htm>



Information

University of Delaware Researchers Explore Use of Algae for Biofuel Source and Pollution Control

Researchers at the University of Delaware are exploring the ability of the algae *H. akashiwo*, which thrives in Delaware, to detoxify nitric acid and metabolize carbon dioxide (CO₂). Research has shown the benefits of using algae to reduce CO₂ emissions from industrial sources, however nitric acid in industrial emissions kill the algae.

University of Delaware researchers are studying enzymes in *H. akashiwo* that allow the algae to convert the nitric acid to non-lethal nitrates. This discovery may allow the algae species to be used to reduce CO₂ emissions from smokestacks while serving as a proven and efficient source of biofuels.

ALERT! is a DVRPC publication.



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