

ALERT! July 2012

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



Air Quality Regulations

EPA Proposes to Strengthen Fine Particle Pollution Standard

On June 14, 2012 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed to strengthen the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for fine particle pollution, also known as PM_{2.5}.

There are currently two forms of the PM_{2.5} standard, an annual standard, which is set at 15 micrograms per cubic meter of air ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) and was established in 1997 and a 24-hour standard which is set at 35 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ and was established in 2006. EPA's proposed action would retain the current 24-hour standard but would revise the annual standard to between 12 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ and 13 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

In addition to revising the annual PM_{2.5} standard, EPA is proposing to set an additional 24-hour standard to improve visibility.

The Clean Air Act requires that the EPA review the NAAQS every five years, in order to consider new research and epidemiological studies on the health and environmental impacts of a particular air pollutant. The process is guided by a panel of scientists known as the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC) which makes recommendations as to the levels at which the NAAQS should be set.

The EPA will be taking public comment on the proposed revision to the new PM_{2.5} standard for nine weeks following the posting of the proposed rule in the Federal Register (the proposed rule was published in the Federal Register on June 29, 2012). The EPA will host two public meetings to solicit public comment on the proposed standards. The meetings will be held on July 17, 2012 in Philadelphia and on July 19, 2012 in Sacramento, California.

The EPA intends to finalize the NAAQS revision in December 2012 and make the final nonattainment area designations by 2014. Regions designated as nonattainment areas under the new standard would then have until 2020 to meet the new standard.

According to the most recent monitoring data available, the DVRPC counties of Chester and Delaware would be designated as nonattainment for the new standard, should the standard be set at 13 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. If the standard is set at 12 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, Philadelphia would also be designated as nonattainment. All of the DVRPC New Jersey Counties currently show monitor design values below 12 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ (a monitor's design value is the three-year annual average mean concentration of PM_{2.5} monitor readings).



**Tuesday,
July 17, 2012
Public Hearing on EPA
Proposed PM_{2.5} Standard
9:00 AM**

William J. Green Federal
Building
600 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA

**Tuesday, Wednesday
August 7-8, 2012
Northern Transportation &
Air Quality Summit**

Loews Hotel
Philadelphia, PA
Register at: www.dvrpc.org

According to EPA projections, the vast majority of counties across the nation that will be impacted by the new standard will be able to meet the standards by 2020 without additional state or local actions due to expected air quality improvements from current federal regulations limiting PM_{2.5} emissions.

For more information on the proposed PM_{2.5} NAAQS revisions, please visit: <http://www.epa.gov/airquality/particlepollution/actions.html>



Health and Air Quality

World Health Organization Declares Diesel Emissions as "Known" Carcinogen

On June 10, 2012, the World Health Organization (WHO) elevated its classification of diesel emissions from a probable carcinogen to a known carcinogen. This classification puts diesel emissions on par with cigarette smoke, asbestos, ultraviolet radiation, and alcohol as Class I carcinogens on the WHO's list of cancer causing agents.

The WHO's findings were influenced by a recent study published by Dr. Debra Silverman, chief of environmental epidemiology for the National Cancer Institute. Dr. Silverman's research of 50 years of exposure to diesel fumes by 12,000 miners showed that nonsmoking miners who were heavily exposed to diesel fumes for years had seven times the normal lung cancer risk of nonsmokers.

Dr. Silverman noted that three federal agencies already classify diesel exhaust as "likely carcinogens," "reasonably expected to be human carcinogens," or "potential occupational carcinogens" and that the federal government would soon follow suit in declaring diesel exhaust a known carcinogen.

Allen Schaeffer, Executive Director of the Diesel Technology Forum, a trade group representing diesel engine manufacturers, states that these studies do support historical exposure studies from before diesel engines became regulated but cautioned that the WHO's findings do not consider the great strides and improvements that have been made to both diesel fuel and diesel engines in the past decade. For example, the United States and European countries use low sulfur diesel fuel which, when combined with newer cleaner burning diesel engines, can emit up to 98 percent less particulate matter than older unregulated diesel engines.

Dr. Silverman claims that her latest published research is the first of its kind to clearly establish a greater exposure to diesel fumes with a greater risk for various kinds of cancer and, as such should encourage health organizations to work on limiting peoples' exposure to diesel emissions.

For more information on the World Health Organization's ruling on diesel emissions, please visit: <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/90/7/12-010712/en>

ALERT! is a DVRPC publication.



Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

DVRPC, 8th Floor
190 N. Independence Mall West
Philadelphia, PA 19106-1520

Phone 215.592.1800 Fax 215.592.9125 www.dvrpc.org