

Alert

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



Air Quality Regulations

EPA Preparing to Weaken Automobile Fuel Economy Standards

The Trump administration is expected to announce a proposal to weaken existing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and fuel economy standards for automobiles and light-duty trucks during the first week of April.

The proposal would repeal fuel economy and GHG emissions standards put in place under the Obama Administration. The State of California has indicated that the state would maintain the stricter, current federal regulations. Because of its historical air pollution problems, California was granted a waiver in the original Clean Air Act of 1970 which allows California to set stricter air pollution standards than the federal government. Other states are permitted to adopt either the California standards or the federal emissions standards. Twelve states, (known as CARB States), including Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware have adopted the California emissions standards.

The existing rules, proposed in 2012, would have required automakers to nearly double the average fuel economy of new cars and trucks to 54.5 miles per gallon by 2025. If fully implemented, the rules would have cut oil consumption by about 12 billion barrels and reduced carbon dioxide pollution by about six billion tons over the lifetime of all the cars affected by the regulations, according to EPA projections.

The new rule and California's resistance to it could ultimately create one set of rules for cars sold in California and the 12 CARB states, and weaker rules for the rest of the country, in effect splitting the nation into two markets. The California and the other CARB States represent over one third of the domestic auto market.

A divided market could require substantially different car designs, experts say, putting the American auto industry into uncharted territory. It remains unclear how the issue might be resolved. One possibility is that two very different auto markets emerge, one with cleaner cars generally along the coasts, and another with more polluting cars concentrated in Middle America. On the other hand, automakers might also opt to generally adhere to the stricter California standards nationwide, blunting the impact of any Trump administration rollback of federal rules.

Another potential resolution to the divided market would be an attempt by the administration to revoke California's Clean Air Act waiver. This move would certainly result in a legal challenge by the CARB states.

Scott Pruitt, the head of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), is expected to frame the new GHG and fuel economy initiative as eliminating a regulatory burden on automakers that will result in more affordable trucks, vans, and sport utility vehicles for buyers, according to people familiar with the plan.



Save the Date

**Monday – Wednesday
April 16-18, 2018**

**NTI Conformity Class
8:00 am – 3:00 pm**

*Location of Meeting:
DVRPC Conference Center
8th Floor
6th and Race Streets
Philadelphia, PA*

**Thursday
May 24, 2018**

**Public Meeting: FY2019 PA
TIP and Conformity Finding
4:00 pm – 6:00 pm**

*Location of Meeting:
DVRPC Conference Center
8th Floor
6th and Race Streets
Philadelphia, PA*

American automakers have lobbied for the proposed rule changes but had hoped to avoid complex regulatory scenarios where they would be required to manufacture different vehicles for different parts of the country. Stricter standards in China and the European Union may further complicate these scenarios for American automakers as they try to compete with new cleaner and more fuel efficient technologies from other countries' automakers.

"For more information on the proposed changes to vehicle fuel efficiency standards, please visit:

www.nytimes.com/2018/03/29/climate/epa-cafe-auto-pollution-rollback.html



Air Quality Information

Household Chemicals Now Rival Transportation Emissions as Top Source for Urban Air Pollution

In an article published in the February 2018 issue of the journal *Science*, researchers from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) claim that volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions from lotions, paints and other household products, contribute about as much air pollution as the transportation sector.

"As transportation gets cleaner, those other sources become more and more important. The stuff we use in our everyday lives can impact air pollution", according to lead author Brian McDonald of NOAA's Chemical Sciences Division.

For this assessment, the researchers focused on VOCs. VOCs can waft into the atmosphere and react to produce either ozone or fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) -- both of which are regulated in the United States because of health impacts, including damage to lungs.

It is widely assumed that much of the pollution we breathe comes from car and truck emissions. But regulators and car manufacturers have made great improvements to emissions controls on engines, fuels, and exhaust systems. McDonald and his colleagues reassessed air pollution sources by sorting through recent chemical production statistics compiled by industries and regulatory agencies, by making detailed atmospheric chemistry measurements in Los Angeles, and by evaluating indoor air quality measurements made by others.

The scientists concluded that in the United States, the amount of VOCs emitted by consumer and industrial products is actually two or three times greater than estimated by current air pollution inventories, which also overestimate vehicular sources. For example, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that about 75 percent of VOC emissions (by weight) come from vehicular sources, and about 25 percent from chemical products. The new study, with its detailed assessment of up-to-date chemical use statistics and previously unavailable atmospheric data, puts the split closer to 50-50.

The disproportionate air quality impact of chemical product emissions is partly because of a fundamental difference between those products and fuels, said NOAA atmospheric scientist Jessica Gilman, a co-author of the paper. "Gasoline is stored in closed, hopefully airtight, containers and the VOCs in gasoline are burned for energy," she said. "But volatile chemical products used in common solvents and personal care products are literally designed to evaporate. You wear perfume or use scented products so that you or your neighbor can enjoy the aroma. You don't do this with gasoline," Gilman said.

The team was particularly interested in how those VOCs end up contributing to particulate pollution. A comprehensive assessment published in the British medical journal *Lancet* last year put air pollution in a top-five list of global mortality threats, with "ambient particulate matter pollution" as the largest air pollution risk. The new study finds that as cars have gotten cleaner, the VOCs forming those pollution particles are coming increasingly from consumer products.

For more information on the contributions of household products to air pollution, please visit:

<https://cires.colorado.edu/news/consumer-industrial-products-now-dominant-urban-air-pollution-source>



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