UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

September 22, 2011

OFFICE OF
AIR AND RADIATION

MEMORANDUM

TO: Air Division Directors, Regions 1 – 10

FROM: Gina McCarthy
Assistant Administrator

SUBJECT: Implementation of the Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standard

The purpose of this memorandum is to clarify for state and local air agencies the status of the ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) and to outline implementation steps moving forward. With the recent decision on the reconsideration of the ozone NAAQS, the current ozone NAAQS is 0.075 ppm. This standard will provide additional public health and welfare protection until the next regular review is completed, and EPA fully intends to implement this current standard as required under the Clean Air Act.[1]

As I will describe below in more detail, EPA is moving ahead with certain required actions to implement the 2008 standard, but will do so mindful of the President's and Administrator's direction that in these challenging economic times EPA should reduce uncertainty and minimize the regulatory burdens on state and local governments. EPA is also continuing to implement and develop federal rules and other programmatic actions to reduce emissions that contribute to smog and improve air quality and public health across the nation.

Area Designations

EPA is proceeding with initial area designations under the 2008 standard, starting with the recommendations states made in 2009 and updating them with the most current, certified air quality data. We expect to issue our proposed changes to the states' recommendations (the "120-day letters") later this fall. We will quickly initiate and complete a rulemaking to establish nonattainment area classification thresholds so that we can finalize the designations. While we intend to take into consideration all comments we receive on the proposed rule, we note that we used a "percent above the standard" approach for classification under the 1997 ozone standard and believe that remains a reasonable approach.

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[1] Note that the 2008 standard is under legal challenge. EPA has recently indicated to the Court that it does not object to the establishment of a briefing schedule in that litigation and has provided a schedule for the Court to consider.

Based on our initial review of ozone air quality data from 2008-2010, 52 areas monitor air quality that exceeds the 0.075 ppm standard. This preliminary review shows considerably fewer areas not meeting the 2008 standard than the number identified in 2009 when states made their recommendations. Using the "percent above the standard" classification approach, 43 of the 52 areas would fall into the Marginal category. As you know, many of the mandatory measures under the Clean Air Act are not required for Marginal areas since they are expected to achieve attainment within 3 years. In addition, EPA's modeling indicates that approximately half of the 52 areas would attain the 0.075 ppm standard by 2015 (the expected attainment deadline for Marginal areas) as a result of the emission-reducing rules already in place.

Because we have states' 2009 recommendations and quality assured ozone data for 2008-2010, there is nothing that state or local agencies need to do until we issue the 120-day letters later this year, though of course, states are welcome to contact us to discuss specific issues at any time. We expect to finalize initial area designations for the 2008 ozone NAAQS by mid-2012. However, we note that EPA currently faces litigation with respect to the timing of the designations and expects that the resolution of the litigation may well affect the precise timing of the schedule for designations.

Planning Requirements and Other Required Submissions

We will begin an expedited rulemaking to outline the implementation requirements for the 2008 standard in the very near future. The rule will be as straightforward and simple as we can make it. As you know, the Clean Air Act provides several years for states to develop their State Implementation Plans (SIPs) and to implement any mandatory measures. However, several deadlines for some state submissions have already passed, including the infrastructure SIPs and interstate transport SIPs. There are few requirements for Marginal areas beyond those SIPs.

EPA does not intend to penalize states for the passage of time, but we may also face litigation on these issues. In negotiating schedules for expeditious completion of required elements, we will seek to minimize any administrative burden on states associated with these requirements. To the extent that states are already engaged or would like to get started with clean air programs to address the standard, we will provide assistance with guidance and model language on rules or other programs, such as energy efficiency.

Federal Actions to Reduce Emissions

EPA will continue to move forward with implementation and development of federal rules that reduce emissions of pollutants that contribute to smog and threaten public health. These actions include recently promulgated rules that lower NOx and VOC emissions such as the Cross-State Air Pollution Rule (CSAPR), the Portland Cement Rule, and Light and Heavy Duty Vehicle standards. They also include rules under development such as the Maximum Achievable Control Technology (MACT) standards for Boilers, the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards (MATS) for power plants, the New Source Performance Standards (NSPS) for Commercial Incinerators/Solid Waste Incinerators (CISWI) and the Oil/Gas sector, and the Tier 3 vehicle and fuel standards. These federal actions will ensure steady forward progress to clean up the nation's air and protect the health of American families, while minimizing and in many cases eliminating the need for states to use their scarce resources on local actions.

The Next Ozone Review
The next regular review of the health and welfare science is well underway. EPA will propose any appropriate revisions in the fall of 2013 and finalize any revisions to the standard in 2014. Attached to this memorandum is a schedule that lays out the upcoming steps in that review.

I hope this memorandum has answered some of the most immediate questions. Please distribute this memo to state and local air agencies in your Region. We will be providing opportunities for further discussion and questions with state and local officials in the coming weeks.

Attachment

September 22, 2011

Ozone NAAQS Review Schedule

Stage of review	Major milestones	Schedule
Integrated Science Assessment (ISA)	1st Draft ISA	Mar 2011
	CASAC and public review 1st Draft ISA	May 19-20, 2011
	2nd Draft ISA	Sept 2011
	CASAC and public review of 2nd Draft ISA	Dec 15-16, 2011
	Final ISA	Feb/Mar 2012
Risk/Exposure Assessments (REAs)	Scope and Methods Plans	Apr 2011
	CASAC consultation and public review of Scope and Methods Plans	May 19-20, 2011
	1st Draft REAs	Feb/Mar 2012
	CASAC and public review 1st Draft REAs	May 2012
	2nd Draft REAs	Nov 2012
	CASAC and public review 2nd Draft REAs	Jan/Feb 2013
	Final REAs	Apr 2013
Policy Assessment (PA) and Rulemaking	1st Draft PA	Apr 2012
	CASAC and public review 1st Draft PA	May 2012
	2nd Draft PA	Dec 2012
	CASAC and public review 2nd Draft PA	Jan/Feb 2013
	Final PA	May 2013
	Proposed Rule	**Oct 2013**
	Final Rule	**July 2014**