

June 2009

To the Public:

This month, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released on its website the latest version of its National Air Toxics Assessment (NATA) which evaluates 181 toxic air pollutants using 2002 emissions inventory data. In this assessment, EPA modeled the public's exposure to toxic air pollutants and estimated inhalation health risks posed by these pollutants. I have enclosed for your information a short summary of the NATA findings for our region of the country.

In New England, the average cancer risk from these toxic pollutants is estimated at 33 in a million (based on continuous exposure over a 70-year lifetime). There are also other health effects, such as impacts on the respiratory system or neurological effects that may result from exposure to these toxic air pollutants. In coordination with representatives from the states' air programs and NESCAUM, my office has identified ten air toxics of greatest concern in New England. Detailed information about these pollutants can be found in the enclosed summary and on our website at [www.epa.gov/region1/eco/airtox](http://www.epa.gov/region1/eco/airtox).

EPA has completed previous National Scale Assessments and continues to update the assessments with improved methodology, improvements to the emissions inventory, and changes in air toxics pollutants and risk characterization. Estimated changes in ambient concentrations or health risks may be due in significant part to improvements in methodology rather than changes in emissions; therefore, comparisons between assessments are not meaningful. However, the assessment is a useful tool that can be used to prioritize air toxic pollutants and to identify areas and pollutants for which additional investigation is needed.

Review of the 2002 assessment underscores again the need to strengthen our efforts to reduce air toxic emissions. We can continue to try to reduce emissions of toxic air pollution through a variety of voluntary and regulatory strategies, including:

- Strengthening implementation and enforcement of emission standards for air toxic pollutants from stationary sources;
- Encouraging the retrofitting of control equipment on diesel vehicles, the use of ultra low sulfur diesel fuel and the adoption of anti-idling strategies;
- Promoting the use of alternative-fueled (and hybrid) vehicles and the use of public transit;
- Working to promote regulatory and voluntary approaches to cleaner wood burning from residential woodstoves, fireplaces, and outdoor hydronic heaters;
- Educating the public on steps that can be taken to improve indoor air quality, such as reducing their exposure to environmental tobacco smoke;
- Promoting improved energy efficiency and the use of clean power;
- Supporting communities in reducing air toxics risks, including support through the Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE) program; and

- Supporting state-wide air toxics risk reduction projects, such as the Maine Air Toxics Initiative, a stakeholder approach to identify and reduce air toxics risks.

EPA New England is already working with many of your staff on these activities and other efforts to reduce chronic diseases, such as asthma and cancer through reducing environmental exposures. I appreciate your agency's continued commitment to these important efforts.

If you have any questions about NATA or EPA's air toxics program, please contact me or our air toxics coordinator Susan Lancey at (617) 918-1656. I look forward to working together to further reducing toxic air pollution and improving the air quality for all New Englanders.

Sincerely,

Ira W. Leighton  
Acting Regional Administrator