



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

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OFFICE OF
AIR AND RADIATION

Melanie A. Marty, Ph.D., Chair
Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee
Cal/EPA, Office of Environmental Health
Hazard Assessment
1515 Clay Street, 16th Floor
Oakland, California 94612

Dear Dr. Marty:

Thank you for your letter of February 2, 2007, to Administrator Johnson regarding the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) review of the national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) for lead and recent changes to the process by which the Agency reviews the NAAQS in general.

As you know, EPA is in the midst of its review of the lead standards, which were set in 1978. We have focused thus far on reviewing and summarizing the available scientific evidence, and we have not yet begun our assessment of which policy options might be appropriate in light of that evidence. The draft Staff Paper released on December 5, 2006, does *not* include any conclusions or recommendations with regard to keeping or changing the current lead air quality standard. Drawing from the agency's Air Quality Criteria Document for Lead, issued in October 2006, the draft Staff Paper analyzes the policy-relevant health and welfare effects of lead. It also summarizes initial analyses of ambient lead concentrations and presents the results of pilot phase exposure and risk assessments. These initial analyses are described more fully in an accompanying technical report, which is available on our website at: http://www.epa.gov/tm/naaqs/standards/pb/s_pb_index.html. On February 6-7, all of these documents were the focus of review by the lead panel of our Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC).

As we move forward in this review, we will begin our assessment of the policy options which might be appropriate in light of the available scientific evidence. When we begin developing our policy assessment document, we will take into account your comments regarding the role of the NAAQS in protecting communities from the dangers of lead pollution and your objection to any policy option that would not maintain a lead NAAQS. I have forwarded your comments to the docket for this rulemaking, EPA-HQ-OAR-2006-0735, so that they may be considered, along with the recommendations of CASAC and other comments received, as EPA moves forward in developing its proposed decision in 2008.

With regard to your comments on the Agency's recent revisions to the NAAQS process, I believe that these changes will enhance our ability to issue timely, well-informed policy decisions based on the best science while continuing to promote broad participation by experts in the scientific community and the public. By streamlining the process and ensuring a continuous review of the latest scientific evidence, the revised process is intended to help to improve the efficiency of NAAQS reviews, and in turn, to help the Agency meet the goal of reviewing each NAAQS on a 5-year cycle as required by the Clean Air Act.

Again, thank you for your letter. I appreciate the opportunity to be of service, and I trust the information provided is helpful.

Sincerely,



William L. Wehrum
Acting Assistant Administrator