

FACT SHEET

FINE PARTICLE MATTER NATIONAL AMBIENT AIR QUALITY STANDARDS: PROPOSED STATE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN REQUIREMENTS

ACTION

- On March 10, 2015, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed requirements for implementing the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for fine particle pollution (also known as PM_{2.5}) in areas that are designated nonattainment for these standards. These requirements would apply to current and future fine particle pollution standards.
- The proposed requirements would apply to state, local and tribal air agencies developing plans that outline how nonattainment areas will meet and maintain fine particle standards including the PM_{2.5} standards established in 2012.
- This proposal presents options for how air agencies could meet state implementation plan (SIP) requirements under the Clean Air Act's general and PM_{2.5}-specific nonattainment area planning provisions, such as:
 - Attainment plan due dates, attainment dates and attainment date extension criteria;
 - Emissions inventory and attainment demonstration requirements;
 - Control strategy requirements, including Reasonably Available Control Measures (RACM) for Moderate nonattainment areas and Best Available Control Measures (BACM) for Serious nonattainment areas;
 - Provisions for demonstrating reasonable further progress and for meeting periodic quantitative milestones; and,
 - Criteria for reclassifying a Moderate nonattainment area to Serious.
- As part of this action, the EPA also is proposing:
 - Options for air agencies to demonstrate that one or more PM_{2.5} precursors – gases that react in the air to form fine particle pollution – do not contribute significantly to PM_{2.5} levels in a particular nonattainment area.
 - Updated requirements for issuing permits for the construction of new major sources or for the modification of existing major sources of directly-emitted PM_{2.5} and PM_{2.5} precursors in PM_{2.5} nonattainment areas.
 - Options for revoking the 1997 primary annual PM_{2.5} standard of 15 micrograms per cubic meter (µg/m³) because the revised 2012 primary annual standard of 12 µg/m³ is now more protective of public health.
- This proposed rule would replace the EPA's 2007 PM_{2.5} Implementation Rule and parts of the 2008 PM_{2.5} New Source Review (NSR) Rule, which were remanded to the EPA by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit in January 2013.
- EPA will accept comment on this proposed rule for 60 days after it is published in the *Federal Register*. The Agency plans to hold one public hearing concerning this proposal in Washington D.C. EPA will announce the date, time and location for the hearing in a separate *Federal Register* notice.

BACKGROUND

- Particle pollution, also called particulate matter or PM, is a complex mixture of extremely small particles and liquid droplets in the air. When inhaled, these particles can reach the deepest regions of the lungs. Exposure to particle pollution is linked to a variety of significant health problems. Particle pollution also is the main cause of visibility impairment in the nation's cities and national parks.
- Fine particles – particles with a diameter equal to or less than 2.5 microns (PM_{2.5}) -- can be emitted directly into the atmosphere, such as black carbon emissions from a diesel engine or smoke from a fire, or they can form from chemical reactions of precursor gases including sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, certain volatile organic compounds, and ammonia. Sources of PM_{2.5} (or the precursor gases that contribute to PM_{2.5} formation) include power plants, gasoline and diesel engines, wood combustion, high-temperature industrial processes such as smelters and steel mills, and forest fires.
- The Clean Air Act (CAA) directs the EPA to set and review air quality standards for common pollutants known as “criteria pollutants,” which the agency has identified based on their likelihood of harming public health and welfare. The EPA established air quality standards for PM₁₀ – particles with a diameter less than 10 microns (also known as coarse particles) – in 1987. In 1997, the agency established the initial air quality standards for PM_{2.5}. The EPA subsequently revised the PM_{2.5} standards in 2006 and 2012 based on the most recently available scientific studies.
 - In December 2012, the EPA revised the primary annual PM_{2.5} standard from 15 µg/m³ to 12 µg/m³ for the protection of public health. The EPA retained the 1997 secondary annual PM_{2.5} standard of 15 µg/m³ during the 2012 review of the standards.
- After the EPA establishes or revises an air quality standard, the agency follows a process set out in the CAA for designating areas as either attaining or not attaining the standard, based on air quality monitoring data and other factors. (Areas with inadequate monitoring data may also be designated “unclassifiable.”) When designated, each PM_{2.5} nonattainment area is initially classified as Moderate.
 - [In December 2014, the EPA issued designations for 14 PM_{2.5} nonattainment areas, and these designations will become effective in April 2015.](#) Air agencies will be required to submit SIPs for these areas within 18 months, by October 2016.
- States, and in some cases local agencies or tribes, are the primary implementers of the NAAQS, responsible for developing and submitting for EPA approval implementation plans that meet the nonattainment planning requirements under Title I, Part D of the CAA.
- After establishing the 1997 PM_{2.5} NAAQS, the EPA promulgated two rules to clarify the statutory requirements for states to implement the newly-established standards. These rules -- the 2007 PM_{2.5} Implementation Rule and the 2008 PM_{2.5} NSR Rule – only required that PM_{2.5} nonattainment areas meet the general nonattainment planning requirements under “subpart 1” of the nonattainment area provisions of the CAA.
- On January 4, 2013, the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals decided that PM_{2.5} nonattainment areas are subject to both the general nonattainment planning provisions of subpart 1 (Title I, Part D) of the CAA, and the nonattainment planning requirements specific to PM₁₀ nonattainment areas under subpart 4 of the Clean Air Act (because PM_{2.5} is a subset of PM₁₀). The court remanded both the

2007 PM_{2.5} Implementation Rule and the 2008 PM_{2.5} NSR Rule to the EPA to be re-promulgated in accordance with subpart 4 requirements.

- This proposed rule responds in part to the court's remand of these two rules, which applied only to the 1997 PM_{2.5} NAAQS. The proposed rule also is intended to apply to areas designated nonattainment for the 2006 24-hour PM_{2.5} NAAQS, the 2012 annual PM_{2.5} NAAQS, and any future revisions to these NAAQS.

HOW TO COMMENT

- Comments, identified by Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2013-0691, may be submitted by one of the following methods:
 - www.regulations.gov: follow the on-line instructions for submitting comments.
 - Email: Comments may be sent by electronic mail (email) to: a-and-r-Docket@epa.gov.
 - Fax: Fax your comments to: (202) 566-9744.
 - Mail: Send your comments to: Air and Radiation Docket and Information Center, Environmental Protection Agency, Mail Code: 2822T, 1200 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20460.
 - Hand Delivery or Courier: Deliver your comments to: Air and Radiation Docket and Information Center, 1301 Constitution Ave., NW, Room 3334, Washington, D.C. 20004. Such deliveries are only accepted during the Docket's normal hours of operation and special arrangements should be made for deliveries of boxed information.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- To download a copy of the proposal from the EPA website, go to "Recent Actions" at the following address: <http://www.epa.gov/airquality/particlepollution/actions.html>.
- This proposed rule and other background information are also available either electronically at <http://www.regulations.gov>, the EPA's electronic public docket and comment system, or in hardcopy at the EPA Docket Center's Public Reading Room.
 - The Public Reading Room is located in the EPA Headquarters, Room Number 3334 in the EPA William Jefferson Clinton West Building, located at 1301 Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. Hours of operation are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. eastern standard time, Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays.
 - Visitors are required to show photographic identification, pass through a metal detector and sign the EPA visitor log. All visitor materials will be processed through an X-ray machine as well. Visitors will be provided a badge that must be visible at all times.
 - Materials for this action can be accessed using Docket ID EPA-HQ-OAR-2013-0691.
- For further information about the proposed rule, contact Rich Damberg of the EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards at (919) 541-5592 or damberg.rich@epa.gov.