

EPA's Approval of a Request from Tennessee to Relax the Summer Gasoline Volatility Standard for the Middle Tennessee Area; and Minor Technical Corrections for Federal Reid Vapor Pressure Gasoline Volatility Standards in Other Areas

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is issuing a final rule to relax the federal Reid Vapor Pressure (RVP) standard applicable to gasoline introduced into commerce in Davidson, Rutherford, Sumner, Williamson, and Wilson Counties in Tennessee (the "Middle Tennessee Area"). These counties are part of the greater Nashville, Tennessee area. This change applies during the summer ozone season which runs from June 1 to September 15 of each year. This action amends our regulations to relax the summer ozone season RVP gasoline standard for the Middle Tennessee Area from 7.8 pounds per square inch (psi) to 9.0 psi.

EPA is acting on a request made by the State of Tennessee to relax the federal RVP standard applicable to gasoline introduced into commerce during the summer fuel season. As described further below, EPA Region 4 conducted a concurrent rulemaking of Tennessee's SIP revision request and issued its final rule on May 1, 2017 (82 FR 20260).

On April 12, 2017, EPA published a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) for today's final rule, and the comments received were not within the scope of EPA's rulemaking. EPA is finalizing the RVP relaxation rulemaking as proposed.

Key Elements of the Final Rule

- This rulemaking becomes effective upon its publication in the Federal Register. This rulemaking relaxes the volatility requirements for gasoline sold in the Middle Tennessee Area during the summer ozone season which runs from June 1 to September 15 of each year. Specifically, this final rule amends the federal RVP gasoline standard for the Middle Tennessee Area from 7.8 psi to 9.0 psi provided at 40 CFR 80.27(a)(2).
- In order to relax the applicable federal RVP standard in an area where the more stringent federal RVP of 7.8 psi is required, an area must be designated as (or redesignated to) attainment. In most cases, the area must also submit a maintenance plan demonstrating continued attainment of the ozone national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) with the less stringent RVP standard in place.
- EPA Region 4 recently conducted a separate rulemaking that approved Tennessee's SIP revision. The SIP revision rulemaking evaluated whether the relaxation of the federal RVP gasoline requirement would not interfere with continued maintenance of the 1997 ozone NAAQS or any other applicable NAAQS, including the 2015 ozone NAAQS. Tennessee submitted the SIP revision with the non-interference demonstration to EPA on November 21, 2016. EPA proposed the approval of the SIP revision on February 24, 2017 (82 FR 11519), and no adverse comments were received. EPA finalized its approval of the SIP revision on May 1, 2017 (82 FR 20260). On April 12, 2017, EPA published an NPRM for today's action, and the comments received were not within the scope of EPA's rulemaking.
- Relaxing the volatility requirements for gasoline sold in the Middle Tennessee Area could be beneficial because this action could improve the fungibility of gasoline in the Area. With this final rulemaking, the gasoline sold in the Middle Tennessee Area can be identical to the fuel sold now in most of the rest of Tennessee. For motorists, the change in summertime gasoline volatility specifications will be virtually unnoticed.
- EPA is also making several minor technical corrections to address clerical errors made in prior rulemakings that relaxed the gasoline RVP standard in other areas.

Background

In 1987, EPA determined that gasoline nationwide had become increasingly volatile, causing an increase in evaporative emissions from gasoline-powered vehicles and equipment. Evaporative emissions from gasoline, referred to as volatile organic compounds (VOCs), are precursors to the formation of tropospheric ozone and contribute to the nation's ground-level ozone problem. Ground-level ozone causes health problems, including damaged lung tissue, reduced lung function, and lung sensitization to other pollutants.

The most common measure of fuel volatility is RVP. To provide for cleaner air and greater public health protection, EPA enforces maximum limits on the RVP of gasoline sold during the summer ozone season which runs from June 1 to September 15 of each year. Specifically, EPA's regulations

at 40 CFR 80.27(a)(2) establish maximum RVP standards of 9.0 psi or 7.8 psi depending on the state, the month, and the area's initial ozone designation with respect to the ozone NAAQS during the summer ozone season.

The Middle Tennessee Area has an approved 10-year maintenance plan for the 1997 ozone NAAQS and is designated as attainment for the 2008 ozone NAAQS and is currently attaining the 2015 ozone NAAQS. As described above, EPA evaluated whether the Middle Tennessee Area will continue to attain the ozone NAAQS, and any other applicable NAAQS, if the RVP standard is relaxed from 7.8 psi to 9.0 psi during the summer ozone season. On May 1, 2017, EPA issued a final rule that approved the revision to the 10-year maintenance plan and determined that the relaxation of the RVP during the summer ozone season would not interfere with the attainment of the ozone NAAQS (82 FR 20260).

For More Information

You can access the rule and related documents on the EPA's Office of Transportation and Air Quality Web site at: www.epa.gov/otaq/fuels/gasolinefuels/volatility/index.htm

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