

ALERT! *July 2005*

ALERT is a monthly update on transportation and air quality planning activities in the Delaware Valley.



CONFORMITY

US EPA Maintains NSR Requirements Used to Meet New, More Protective Ozone Standard

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) will maintain New Source Review (NSR) requirements that will be used by states and communities across the country to meet the new, more protective 8-hour standard for ground-level ozone. The decision responds to an Earthjustice petition for reconsideration of the final rule to implement Phase 1 of the 8-Hour National Ambient Air Quality Ozone Standard.

To ensure a smooth transition to the new 8-hour ozone standard, the NSR requirements will continue to apply to large sources of ozone-forming air pollutants in nonattainment areas for the 8-hour ozone standard, not the recently revoked 1-hour standard. US EPA determined that the states should be allowed to remove 1-hour ozone NSR programs from their state implementation plans and replace them with an NSR program that is applicable to the 8-hour standard. By ensuring that new, rebuilt, or modified plants and facilities do not contribute to air quality problems, the NSR program is one tool that nonattainment areas use to meet and maintain US EPA's air quality standards.

For more information, go to: <http://www.epa.gov/nsr>

Clean Air Visibility Rule Increases Protection for National Parks and Wilderness Areas

National parks and wilderness areas will receive further protection under the Clean Air Visibility Rule signed June 15 by the US EPA. Under the rule states will be required to identify older industrial facilities and power plants that affect visibility in specially protected areas.

The rule requires states to identify and determine appropriate emissions controls for facilities built between 1962 and 1977 that have the potential to emit more than 250 tons a year of visibility-impairing pollution. Those facilities fall into 26 categories, including utility and industrial boilers, and large industrial plants such as pulp mills, refineries and smelters.

The rule complements the emissions reductions forecasted by the implementation of the Clean Air Interstate Rule and the suite of regulations reducing motor vehicle emissions. . As these clean air rules take effect over the next decade, EPA projects that the pollution reductions will improve air quality across the country,



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help communities achieve new, more protective standards for ozone and fine particles (PM 2.5), and further protect America's national parks and wilderness areas.

EPA's benefits analysis shows that this rule will provide approximately \$240 million annually in visibility improvements in southeastern and southwestern parks. The rule will also provide substantial health benefits in the range of \$8.4 - \$9.8 billion each year -- preventing an estimated 1,600 premature deaths, 2,200 non-fatal heart attacks, 960 hospital admissions, and more than 1 million lost school and work days. The total annual costs of this rule range from \$1.4 to \$1.5 billion.

Final US EPA Staff Paper Recommends Stronger Particle Pollution Standards

US EPA staff review of national air quality standards for particle pollution recommends strengthening and refining current standards to better protect public health and visibility. The EPA "final staff paper", based on the latest science, does not change current air quality standards. It does, however, recommend revising the agency's national standards for fine (PM2.5) and coarse particles (PM10).

The Clean Air Act requires US EPA to periodically review air quality standards to ensure they provide adequate health and environmental protection and to update those standards if necessary. In December 2004, US EPA and states began implementing the first fine particle standard when the agency designated areas of the country that require additional local, state and federal steps to reduce PM 2.5.

While acknowledging remaining uncertainties, the staff paper concludes that the latest scientific, health and technical information about particle pollution supports strengthening US EPA's current health-based standards for fine particles. The paper recommends approaches for doing so.

The staff paper recommends that US EPA continue to regulate but revise the current PM10 standards with a new health-based standard for particles known as "thoracic coarse" particles -- particles between 2.5 and 10 micrometers in diameter that can be deeply inhaled. Staff recommends that such a standard apply to more toxic urban coarse particles.

The assessments, conclusions, and recommendations included in the staff paper are staff judgments. They do not represent agency decisions on the PM standards. The agency is required by a consent decree to issue a proposal regarding the particle pollution standards by Dec. 20, 2005, and to issue a final rule by Sept. 27, 2006. That rule may, or may not, include changes to the existing standards.

ALERTI is a DVRPC publication.

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