

ALERT! *May 2006*

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



CONFORMITY

May signals the start of Ozone Season

Beginning on May 1st, Penn State University will again provide daily ground-level ozone forecasting to DVRPC for the Philadelphia – Wilmington – Atlantic City Ozone Non-attainment area. Ozone forecasting begins in May and continues through September because weather patterns in the late spring and summer months are generally characterized by higher temperatures, more intense sunlight and drier air that are important factors that promote the combination of NO_x and VOCs to form ground-level ozone.

The summer Ozone Season is the most active time of the year for the Air Quality Partnership's (AQP) public outreach efforts. While the AQP is active year-round, providing PM_{2.5} forecasts and encouraging the public to reduce polluting emissions, the program is most active during the summer when ozone, our region's most chronic air pollution problem, is most prevalent. From May through September the AQP disseminates air quality forecasts and health advisories for ozone and actively provides tips to encourage the public to take action to reduce both ozone and PM_{2.5} pollution through a substantial advertising and public information campaign.

The AQP encourages positive action to improve air quality such as taking transit, car pooling and trip-linking to reduce vehicle miles traveled by individuals and vehicle emissions. Reducing emissions, especially on days when air quality is forecast to be unhealthy (Code Orange or Red on the Air Quality Index) can exert significant effects on air quality. Reducing emissions on Air Quality Action (AQA) Days can actually help to prevent ground-level ozone or PM_{2.5} levels from entering into or lingering in the unhealthy range.

In 2006, the Ozone Action Program was renamed the Air Quality Action Program. The change is a response to the region being classified as a PM_{2.5} non-attainment area by the EPA and reflects efforts to reduce particle pollution as well as ground-level ozone. Along with a change in name, the AQA program will call Action Days whenever pollution levels are forecast to exceed the federal health standard for air quality (Code Orange or Red). In the past only Code Red days were called Action Days.

Household surveys have shown that the AQA Program has been an effective tool for alerting the public about the dangers of ground-level ozone. Recognition of the term "Ozone Action Day" has increased from 28% in 1997 to 58% in 2005. The goal of the AQA program, moving forward, is to encourage the public to translate these high levels of awareness into actions that help reduce days when air quality in the region does not meet the federal air quality health standards.

For more information and daily air quality forecasts, please visit the Air Quality Partnership at www.airqualitypartnership.org or call 800-872-7261.



**SAVE
THE
DATE**

**Friday,
May 12th, 2006
Ozone Season Kick-off and
Clean Air Fair
11:00 am**

Independence Visitor Center
6th and Market Streets
Philadelphia

**Tuesday,
May 23rd, 2006
Draft Transportation
Improvement Program and
Conformity Public Hearing
3:00 pm**

DVRPC Conference Center
ACP Building, 8th Floor
6th and Race Streets
Philadelphia, PA



TRANSPORTATION – AIR QUALITY

Governor Rendell, President Bush Request Waivers from Clean Air Act's Reformulated Gas Program

During the last week of April, both Governor Rendell and President Bush requested that EPA grant waivers to the reformulated gasoline program guidelines enacted under the 1990 amendments to the Clean Air Act. The guidelines require that regions of the country with the most serious ozone pollution problems utilize reformulated gasoline (RFG) during the summer months to reduce ground-level ozone pollution. In Pennsylvania; Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia Counties are classified as an ozone non-attainment area and are required by federal law to implement the RFG program.

The request for waivers to the RFG program is aimed at easing gasoline shortages that have arisen as refiners have switched to using Ethanol in place of methyl-tertiary butyl ether (MTBE) in reformulated gasoline, a measure proscribed by the Energy Policy Act of 2005. The switchover has led to a bottleneck in the supply of RFG and localized shortages across the nation. Governor Rendell states that the Philadelphia region has been especially impacted by this bottleneck and requested a two week waiver to the mandated switch to RFG to ease supply shortages.



OTHER NEWS

Chester County Intermediate Unit and Great Valley School District Receive Clean School Bus USA Grants from EPA

The Chester County Intermediate Unit (CCIU) and Great Valley School District (GVSD), in partnership with the Krapf Bus Company, have received grants to retrofit over 60 diesel powered school buses from the EPA's Clean School Bus USA program. The retrofits will consist of installation of Diesel Particulate Filters on 33 mini-buses operated by the CCIU and 33 full sized buses operated by GVSD. The grants will also subsidize the purchase of Ultra Low Sulfur Diesel (ULSD) for both of the bus fleets. The combined retrofits and utilization of ULSD fuel will reduce bus emissions by an estimated 60-90% and will significantly reduce students' exposure to particulate matter emissions.

The grants were announced at an April 24, 2006 press conference at the Great Valley School District Administration Building. GVSD was awarded \$200,000 and the CCIU was awarded \$175,000 for the project. This retrofit project is among 37 recipients of Clean School Bus USA awards that were selected from more than 170 applications nationwide. Congress has appropriated \$7 million for the Clean School Bus USA program for 2006. It is anticipated that a Request for Applications for this year's grant round will be issued by EPA Region III in late spring or early summer 2006.

For more information about the Clean School Bus USA Grant Program, visit the EPA's website at: <http://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/funding.htm>

ALERT! is a DVRPC publication.



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