ALERT! September 2006

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

CONFORMITY

Seventeen Air Quality Action Days Called in DVRPC Region in Summer 2006

The number of Air Quality Action Days has remained consistent between the summers of 2005 and 2006. As of September 1, 2006, air quality in the region has reached the Code Orange level (unhealthy for sensitive populations) a total of 15 days. Air quality reached the Code Red level (unhealthy) on only two days. In 2005, there were 16 Code Orange and 2 Code Red days. The Federal Air Quality Standards are violated when Code Orange levels are reached.

Poor air quality is largely influenced by meteorologic conditions. High temperatures and sunlight are key ingredients in the formation of ground level ozone or smog. Particle pollution is more complex and can come from many sources, be directly emitted, or form under various weather conditions. This variability makes particle pollution a year round problem. While windy or rainy days largely improve regional air quality; hot, humid and stagnant days generally increase the likelihood of poor air quality. For these reasons, poor air quality episodes typically occur during the summer months.

The number, duration and severity of Air Quality Action episodes have been trending downward when variations in weather conditions are taken into consideration. Air quality improvements can be attributed to gains in emission control technology, more stringent regulations and public efforts to reduce polluting activities.

SAVE THE DATE

Friday,
September 15th, 2006
Public Outreach for Transportation Funding and Reform Commission Meeting
10:00 am

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

Monday,
September 22nd, 2006
Philadelphia Diesel Difference Working Group Meeting
10:00 am

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

HEALTH AND AIR QUALITY

Study Shows Particle Pollution Exhibits Long Term Impacts on Childhood Lung Development

A study published in the July 6 edition of the *New England Journal of Medicine* shows that continued exposure to even moderate levels of particle pollution diminish lung function and may have long term impacts on lung development in children. The study noted that higher levels of exposure to particle pollution are associated with lower levels of lung function and hypothesized that particle pollution restricts lung growth in children.

The study was conducted on 114 children in Leicester, England. Air Quality in Leicester meets the UK's air quality standards. Researchers measured the lung function (how hard and fast the children could exhale) and carbon particle content in the children's lungs. Research indicated that as carbon content in the lungs increased, lung capacity decreased, even after control factors such as body mass, gender and exposure to second hand smoke were factored into the analysis.

Researchers concluded that while moderate particle pollution exerts a small negative effect on lung growth, long term exposure ran result in cumulative effects that ultimately reduce lung function in children. Fine particle pollution can penetrate deep into the lungs and imbed into lung tissue, making them less likely to be exhaled.

The study's findings reinforce the importance of limiting children's exposure to particle pollution by reducing pollution from school buses and limiting strenuous activity on Air Quality Action Days when particle pollution is forecast to reach unhealthy levels.

TRANSPORTATION – AIR QUALITY

PA DEP Accepting Applications for Alternative Fuel Incentive Grants

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) is now accepting applications for the Alternative Fuel Incentive Grant (AFIG) program. AFIG finances projects that support the production and use of clean burning fuels. Examples of past projects funded by the AFIG program include grants to Temple and West Chester Universities for the purchase of vehicles that can run on Compressed Natural Gas and a grant to the Great Valley School District to subsidize the district's purchase of B20 diesel (a blend of 20 percent biodiesel and 80 percent diesel) for their fleet of school buses.

The goal of the AFIG program is to stimulate the use of alternative fuels by funding investment in production and refueling infrastructure. School districts, transit authorities, local government agencies and non-profits are eligible for AFIG funding. For the first time AFIG funding is also available to producers of B20 and E85 (a blend of 85 percent ethanol and 15 percent gasoline) fuels. These alternative fuels generally produce less smog forming pollutants than gasoline and traditional diesel fuel and since they are produced domestically, reduce the demand for foreign oil.

For this round of AFIG funding, grants will cover 100 percent of the added costs to eligible applicants who purchase B20 diesel or E85 for use in their fleets. The state is also offering incentives, up to $625,000, in a 12 month period based on production levels to Pennsylvania producers of biodiesel and ethanol to supply alternative fuels.

AFIG applications are due in DEP offices in Harrisburg no later than 4:00 p.m. on October 2, 2006.

For the complete grant application package, please visit the Pennsylvania DEP website at: www.depweb.state.pa.us search word AFIG

ALERT! is a DVRPC publication.

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