

# ALERT! *September 2009*

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



## Conformity

### US EPA Proposes Amendments to the PM<sub>2.5</sub> Transportation Conformity Rule

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published proposed amendments to the Transportation Conformity Rule to provide guidance for states and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in areas designated as being in non-attainment of the new 2006 PM<sub>2.5</sub> National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS).

The proposed amendments detail the procedures for demonstrating transportation conformity in areas designated as "non-attainment" under the revised 2006 PM<sub>2.5</sub> NAAQS, and propose a new baseline year test to use to demonstrate conformity in areas without adequate or approved State Implementation Plan (SIP) budgets. The proposed amendments also clarify the differences and similarities in procedures for demonstrating conformity under the 1997 and 2006 PM<sub>2.5</sub> NAAQS.

Under the proposed rules, DVRPC will be able to use the existing Annual PM<sub>2.5</sub> SIP budget in Mercer County to demonstrate transportation conformity for the 2006 24-hour PM<sub>2.5</sub> standard in the DVRPC portion of the New York – Northern New Jersey – Connecticut PM<sub>2.5</sub> Non-attainment Area. In the Philadelphia – Wilmington PM<sub>2.5</sub> Non-attainment Area, DVRPC will need to demonstrate that emissions from proposed transportation projects are below emissions from an approved baseline year. For the 1997 Annual PM<sub>2.5</sub> standard, the baseline year is 2002. For the 2006 PM<sub>2.5</sub> standard, the baseline year will most likely be 2008.

EPA held a public comment period on this proposed rulemaking from May 15 until June 29, 2009, and if approved these rules will dictate the procedures that DVRPC uses to demonstrate transportation conformity in the spring of 2010 when the Pennsylvania and New Jersey Transportation Improvement Programs are updated.

For more information on the EPA's proposed amendments to the Transportation Conformity rule please visit: [www.epa.gov/fedrgstr/EPA-AIR/2009/May/Day-15/a11184.htm](http://www.epa.gov/fedrgstr/EPA-AIR/2009/May/Day-15/a11184.htm).



**SAVE  
THE  
DATE**

**Monday,  
September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2009  
Philadelphia Diesel  
Difference  
Working Group  
10:00 am**

DVRPC Conference Center  
8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
6<sup>th</sup> and Race Streets  
Philadelphia, PA

**Tuesday,  
September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009  
Central Transportation  
Forum  
1:00 pm – 3:30 pm**

Hillsborough Township Municipal  
Building  
379 South Branch Road  
Hillsborough, NJ



## Air Quality

### Unusually Cool and Cloudy Summer Contributes to Lower than Normal Bad Air Quality Days

The number of Air Quality Action Days, or days when air quality has violated the federal health based standards, has been noticeably down this year when compared to previous summers. As of September 1, 2009, there have been only five days that have exceeded the NAAQS for ozone and no day has violated the NAAQS for PM<sub>2.5</sub>. These statistics are more exceptional when considering that four out of five of the Air Quality Action Days would not have violated the ozone standard that was in place in 2007. The Ozone standard was revised from 84 parts per billion (ppb) to 75 ppb in 2008. Only one day this summer reached ozone levels of 84 ppb. This is compared to 28 days in 2008 that violated the new ozone standard and 12 days that violated the old standard.

The reduced number of Air Quality Action Days can be attributed to a number of factors that are all favorable to lower ozone levels. The first and maybe most significant was a cloudier and cooler summer than normal. Ground-level ozone is not directly emitted but forms when pollutants, specifically volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides from power plants, vehicles and industry, combine in the presence of high temperatures and sunlight to form ozone. Since the number of sunny days over ninety degrees was lower than normal this summer, climate undoubtedly contributed to fewer exceedances of the standard.

The current economic slowdown has also contributed to reduced ozone levels coming into our region from manufacturing centers and power plants in upwind states, lowering the background ozone and precursor pollutant levels that help push ozone levels into the unhealthy range.

Finally, evidence does indicate that ozone concentrations in the eastern United States have been dropping since federal regulations limiting power plant emissions took effect in 2002. Ozone concentrations in the region have been dropping over the past few years, even during periods of more normal summer weather.

Looking to the future, regions and the nation as a whole will need to continue to reduce emissions from power generation, transportation and industry to maintain recent gains in air quality. If climate change predictions are accurate, warmer drier summers will create weather patterns that are even more conducive to ozone formation, making efforts to reduce precursor pollutants even more imperative.

For more information on air quality in our region and to view the daily air quality forecast please visit: [www.airqualitypartnership.org](http://www.airqualitypartnership.org)

ALERT! is a DVRPC publication.



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