

Alert

dvrpc | June 2014

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



Air Quality Regulations

U.S. EPA Proposes First Guidelines to Cut Carbon Pollution from Existing Power Plants

On June 2, 2014, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released the *Clean Power Plan* proposal, which for the first time cuts carbon pollution from existing power plants. Power plants are the single largest source of carbon pollution in the United States and account for approximately one-third of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) in the nation. While regulations limit emissions of arsenic, mercury, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and particle pollution from power plants, there are no limits on carbon emission levels.

According to the EPA, implementation of the *Clean Power Plan* will:

- Cut carbon emissions from the power sector nationwide by 30 percent below 2005 levels;
- Cut particle pollution, nitrogen oxides, and sulfur dioxide by more than 25 percent as a co-benefit; and
- Shrink electricity bills by approximately 8 percent by increasing energy efficiency and reducing energy demand.

The *Clean Power Plan* will be implemented through a federal-state partnership. The EPA has set target GHG reduction levels for each state but will allow states to develop strategies for meeting those targets through limits on smokestack emissions, energy conservation programs, alternative energy sources, or a mix of various strategies.

The EPA has announced a 120-day public comment period to educate the public and collect input on ways to improve the Plan. The EPA anticipates finalizing the carbon emissions standards in June 2015 and allows the states one year, until June 2016, to submit a state plan to the EPA outlining how the state will meet their reduction goals. States have the option of submitting a two-phased implementation plan if they are unable to meet the June 2016 submission deadline.

Under the *Clean Power Plan*, Pennsylvania will be required to reduce carbon emissions by 490 pounds of carbon dioxide produced per megawatt hour (lbs/MWh) of electricity generated (32% reduction), while New Jersey will be required to reduce carbon emissions by 400 lbs/MWh (43% reduction) between 2012 and 2030.

The rule is being resisted by the coal industry and coal producing states but energy producers are less critical of the standards, praising the long-term timeframe and flexibility of using "outside the fence" strategies to meet the Plan's goals. It is widely expected that the Plan will be challenged in court from both industry groups and coal producing states for being too stringent



Save the Date

**Monday,
June 23, 2014**

**Philadelphia Diesel
Difference Working Group
10:00 am**

*Location of Meeting:
Tour of Waste Management
Recycling Facility
5245 Bleigh Avenue
Philadelphia, PA*

*Please register with
Eric Cheung at
echeung@cleanair.org*

**Thursday,
June 26, 2014**

**Public Meeting: FY 2015 PA
TIP, Connections 2040 Long-
Range Plan Amendment and
Conformity Determination
for TIPs and Plan
4:00 – 6:00 pm**

*Location of Meeting:
DVRPC Conference Center
8th Floor
6th and Race Streets
Philadelphia, PA*

and possibly from environmental groups as being too lenient. The U.S. Supreme Court has already ruled that the EPA has authority to regulate GHGs under the Clean Air Act.

For more information on the EPA's *Clean Power Plan* please visit:
www2.epa.gov/carbon-pollution-standards/clean-power-plan-proposed-rule.



Health and Air Quality

DVRPC Region Listed in Top 25 Most Ozone and PM_{2.5} Polluted Regions in the Country in the American Lung Association's 2014 State of the Air Report

The Philadelphia-Camden-Vineland PA-NJ-DE metropolitan region¹ once again was ranked in the top 25 most polluted regions for ozone and fine particles (PM_{2.5}) by the American Lung Association (ALA) in their *State of the Air* report released in April 2014. The region was ranked as the 16th worst region for ozone pollution, and 11th for long-term (annual average) fine particle pollution (PM_{2.5}). The region remained off of the list for short term (24-hour average) PM_{2.5} pollution. The ALA used quality-assured data for the period 2010 to 2012 to develop the 2014 report card on ozone and particle pollution for the nation's cities and counties.

The report also ranks individual counties based on the number of days that air quality reaches unhealthy levels (code orange and above) on the Air Quality Index. Of the eight counties in the DVRPC region that were graded, every county, once again, received an "F" grade for ozone pollution. Burlington County does not have an air quality monitor and was not graded in this report. Bucks County received a failing grade for short term PM_{2.5} pollution, and Chester, Delaware, and Philadelphia counties received failing grades for annual PM_{2.5} pollution.

The ALA used the PM_{2.5} daily standard of 35mg/m³, adopted in September 2006; the PM_{2.5} annual standard of 12mg/m³, adopted in September 2012; and the ozone standard of 75 parts per billion, adopted in March 2008, to determine the unhealthy ranges for particle pollution and ozone.

The 2014 *State of the Air* report shows some positive trends in the nation's air quality. Emissions that contribute to the six criteria pollutants, regulated by the EPA (including ozone precursors and PM_{2.5}) continued to decline despite a rebounding economy and growing population.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), national emissions of ozone and fine particle pollution dropped by 9% and 33% respectively, between 2000 and 2012, even while Gross Domestic Product, vehicle miles travelled, and population grew by approximately 35%, 22%, and 18% over the same time period. Air quality improvements can be attributed to better emissions controls on vehicles, diesel engines, and point sources, such as industry and power plants.

Ozone levels did show increases since the previous report in the most ozone polluted metro areas, but weather certainly played a role in this statistic. Since sunlight and high temperatures facilitate ozone formation, the exceptionally warm summer experienced in 2012 resulted in higher ozone levels and more unhealthy ozone days in these areas than in the previous reporting periods. Recent monitoring data in the DVRPC region shows that ozone and PM_{2.5} levels in the region meet the 1997 Ozone and 2006 PM_{2.5} air quality standards.

To view the entire 2014 *State of the Air* report, including grading methodology and statistical analysis, please visit the American Lung Association at www.stateoftheair.org

¹ The Philadelphia-Camden-Vineland PA-NJ-DE-MD metropolitan region includes Philadelphia, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery Counties in PA and Camden, Burlington, Gloucester and Salem Counties in NJ.



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