

Alert

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



Air Quality Regulations

U.S. Supreme Court Hears Arguments in *Michigan v. EPA* to Determine Fate of Mercury Air Toxics Standards

On March 25, 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court began hearing arguments in *Michigan v. EPA*. The case will decide the fate of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) 2011 Mercury and Air Toxics Standards which sets emissions standards for mercury, arsenic, and other hazardous air pollutants from oil and coal fired power plants.

The standards, which were scheduled to be implemented in 2015, were challenged in court by coal industry groups along with nineteen states. Most of the plaintiff states in the suit are in the southern and upper Midwestern U.S. that host many of the potentially regulated power generators. Seventeen states, largely in the eastern U.S., that are downwind of these power plants, joined the EPA in support of the standards. Neither Pennsylvania nor New Jersey is participating in the suit, although Delaware, Maryland, and New York have joined the EPA in defending the proposed standards.

The Mercury and Air Toxics Standards are not numerical standards but the rule sets technology-based emissions limitations for mercury, arsenic, and other toxic air pollutants. The rules require that individual facilities meet emission reductions achieved by the average of the top 12 percent best controlled sources. The rules give existing sources four years to install technology to meet the emission standards.

According to EPA estimates, the standards would impact approximately 600 facilities nationwide at a cost of \$10 billion to implement the standards. It is anticipated that the rule will reduce mercury, arsenic, and other hazardous air pollutant emissions by 90 percent from those facilities. The EPA claims environmental and health benefits from the standards will reach between \$37 and \$90 billion while industry claims benefits of only \$4 million to \$6 million.

The plaintiffs in the case claim that EPA should consider the implementation costs when determining if the rule is "appropriate". The EPA, environmental, and health advocates claim that the technology required to meet the standards is already in place at most of the coal-fired power plants in the country and that non-complying facilities are profiting from polluting the air to the detriment of public health.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruled in favor of the EPA in 2014, and environmental advocates expressed surprise at the Supreme Court's willingness to hear the case. The Supreme Court is expected to make a final judgement on the case in June, 2015.



Save the Date

Saturday,
April 18, 2015

Clean Air Council 5K for Clean Air

Location of Event:
Eakins Oval
Philadelphia Museum of Art

Register at:
www.5krunforcleanair.org

Friday,
April 24, 2015

Temple University Earthfest

Location of Event
Temple University
Ambler Campus
Ambler, PA



Health and Air Quality

Center for Disease Control and EPA Release Recommendations for Physical Activity on Air Quality Action Days

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have released revised guidelines for air quality and outdoor activities. The guidance was primarily devised for schools, since children and teenagers are particularly susceptible to the effects of air pollution, but these guidelines are applicable to anyone planning to exercise outside.

In the past, the general recommendations for activities for people in groups that are sensitive to air pollution, such as children, the elderly, and people with respiratory disease, were to avoid outdoor activities on high ozone days or any strenuous activities on high fine particle pollution (PM_{2.5}) days when the Air Quality Index (AQI) reached Code Orange levels. With the enactment of more stringent air quality standards, and hence lower levels of ozone and PM_{2.5} required to reach the Code Orange level on the AQI, the CDC and EPA have revised the activity recommendations for Air Quality Action Days. These revisions also recognize that physical activity is critical to maintaining good health and fitness and that a balance can be struck between protecting developing lungs and keeping children active.

The guidelines recommend that on Code Orange air quality days that short duration outdoor activities, such as recess and physical education class, are acceptable. For longer duration activities such as sports practices, the guidance recommends less intense activities and more breaks. The guidance also highlights the need for people with asthma or breathing disorders to monitor how they are feeling on these days and take reasonable actions if they start to not feel well.

Since ozone pollution peaks in the mid-day sun, activities can be scheduled for early morning or late afternoon. On high particle pollution days, strenuous activities should be limited during high traffic times, such as morning and afternoon rush hours. Under these guidelines, healthy adults should be able to participate in moderate activities, such as walking or biking to work on Code Orange air quality days as long as they limit extended exertion.

For a copy of "Air Quality and Outdoor Activity Guidance for Schools" please visit: www.epa.gov/airnow/school_flag/school-chart-2014.pdf



Air Quality Partnership

Air Quality Education Workbooks Available from the Air Quality Partnership

The Air Quality Partnership, through an environmental education grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, has developed an age-appropriate educational workbook that meets the Pennsylvania Core aligned standards for the subjects of Environment and Ecology, and Health, Safety, and Physical Education for 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders.

The narrative of the book follows a character named Mike who cannot play at recess because of an asthma attack triggered by poor outdoor air quality. The book teaches students about the causes of air pollution and ways that communities and individuals can reduce air pollution.

The workbook and teacher resources are available for download at www.airqualitypartnership.org/education.htm. Limited numbers of printed copies of the workbook are available to teachers and planning partners in the region and can be obtained by contacting Sean Greene at sgreene@dvrpc.org.



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