

A!ert



The **Alert** newsletter provides monthly updates on transportation and air quality planning activities within the Delaware Valley.

Air Quality

American Lung Association Annual Report Shows Air Quality Improvements in Region

The American Lung Association recently published the newest edition of "State of the Air," a series of reports which documents air quality in the United States since 2000. This year's update shows the number unhealthy days due to ozone has continued its decades-long decline on both the national and regional levels. The Delaware Valley also continues to see meaningful improvements in particulate pollution levels, but this is not the case in many parts of the country.

The report uses the air quality index (AQI) levels established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to evaluate ozone and 24-hour fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) pollution based on the number and severity of unhealthy days metropolitan areas experienced over a three-year period. Where data exists, counties are assigned a letter grade for each pollutant. A weighted average of 3.2 unhealthy days or less per year constitutes a passing grade.

For the Greater Philadelphia Region, ozone continues to be the more common cause of unhealthy days despite improvements. Of the nine counties in the DVRPC region, three did not receive passing grades for ozone while all passed for PM_{2.5}. The three counties in our region that received an "F" grade for ozone - Philadelphia, Bucks, Mercer - had a weighted average of 6.5, 5.7, and 3.3 unhealthy days respectively. However, this still represents a large improvement over years prior. For context, from 2001 to 2003 Philadelphia had a weighted average of 47.5 unhealthy ozone days per year. Furthermore, Camden County has received a passing grade for ozone for the first time in the history of the "State of the Air" report. Nationally, the number of counties that got an "F" for ozone hit an all-time low. Impressively, New York recorded its lowest number of days with high ozone for the third year in a row. The American Lung Association attributed much of the decline in ambient ozone levels across the country to emissions controls put in place by the Clean Air Act, as well as the economic shift away from coal. However, hotter and dryer days due to climate change are undercutting progress.

The report also highlighted a growing discrepancy in air quality between eastern and western states. In places like California, drought and wildfires have caused a dramatic rise in the number and severity of unhealthy days due to short-term PM_{2.5} pollution. Metropolitan areas like Denver, Reno, and Spokane broke records for unhealthy days since the last "State of the Air" report. Bakersfield, California topped the list with 51.5 unhealthy PM days while the Los Angeles-Long Beach area came in at number 9 with 20.2 days. By the same metric, the Philadelphia-Reading-Camden area experienced 2.3 unhealthy days. While better by comparison and technically passing, this also shows that there is still work to be done to improve air quality in our region and ensure healthy air for all especially in light of a growing body of evidence suggests the measurable health impacts of PM_{2.5} pollution exist even at levels below the federal standard.

For more information, visit www.lung.org/research/sota



Save the Date

Tuesday, May 30, 2023

**Federal Highway Administration
Charging and Fueling
Infrastructure Funding
Program**

Applications Due

Information is available at:
fhwa.dot.gov
Search "CFI"

Friday, June 2, 2023

**NJ BPU
Clean Fleet EV Incentive
Program**

Applications Due

Information is available at:
njcleanenergy.com
Search "Electric Vehicle
Incentive Programs"

Air Quality and Transportation

EPA Proposes Stricter Emissions Standards to Hasten Electric Vehicle Adoption

On April 12, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed new standards that aim to cut tailpipe emissions and accelerate the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs). The proposed rules for light- and medium-duty vehicles set fleet-wide targets for automakers beginning in model year (MY) 2027 that could be met using a variety of emissions control technologies. However, [The New York Times](#) reports that the standards are so strict that in practice, an automaker would need zero-emissions vehicles (ZEVs) to account for two-thirds of its light-duty sales by MY 2032 to avoid penalties. The [announcement from EPA](#) highlights that strategies besides selling battery-electric vehicles (BEVs) could also be used to help meet the light- and medium-duty standards including efficiency improvements to conventional gasoline engines, use of particulate filters, and sales of hybrid and fuel-cell vehicles. On the same day, EPA also proposed [standards for heavy-duty vehicles](#) such as trucks, buses, and locomotives.

The recent announcements represent an accelerated timeline for vehicle electrification compared to ones previously put forth. In 2021, President Biden signed an executive order which set the goal for 50% of new passenger vehicles sold to be electric by 2030. Even this was considered ambitious by many given that by 2022, only about 5.8% of new cars sold were all-electric vehicles. Furthermore, some worry the rapid adoption of plug-in electric vehicles could strain the power grid, global battery supply chain, and public charging infrastructure. This has led many to question if meeting the new regulations would even be feasible. EPA's press release addresses this stating, "These [technological] developments are bolstered by President Biden's investments in America, which provide unprecedented resources to support the development and market for clean vehicle technologies and associated infrastructure and represent significant investment in expanding the manufacture, sale, and use of zero-emission vehicles. As these technologies advance, battery costs continue to decline and consumer interest in electric vehicles continues to grow. President Biden's legislative accomplishments are also supporting critical generation of clean electricity and production of clean hydrogen needed to decarbonize transportation. EPA considered this rapid innovation in its assessment that tighter emissions standards are feasible."

Environmentalists praised the action noting that it would help President Biden make good on his pledge to cut carbon emissions to half of 2005 levels by 2030 and to net-zero by 2050. A 2021 report by the International Energy Agency (IEA) estimated that to avoid a 1.5°C increase in global temperatures above preindustrial levels would require immediate and drastic action by governments and corporations. Specifically, the IEA suggests that to avoid irreparable harm to the environment from climate change, EVs should comprise 60% of new car sales by 2030, and automakers should stop selling gasoline and diesel cars by 2035. In addition to the climate benefits, EPA also notes that vehicle electrification will have measurable health benefits especially in communities already overburdened by air pollution. The proposed standards are now open for public comment and are to be brought before public hearings in May.

Grant Opportunity

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Continues to Accept Grant Applications for Driving PA Forward Program

As a result of litigation following the Volkswagen emissions scandal, state governments were awarded millions of dollars to fund environmental mitigation efforts. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), through its Driving PA Forward program, has been tasked with distributing Pennsylvania's allotment of the settlement since 2018. Driving PA Forward continues to fund projects that reduce diesel emissions by replacing or repowering older vehicles. Eligible road vehicles include Class 4-8 freight trucks, school and transit buses, and port drayage trucks. Funding is also available to address other sources of emissions such as switcher locomotives, ferries, tugboats, forklifts, port cargo handling equipment, ocean going vessels, and airport ground support equipment. As of the end of the last fiscal year, over \$70 million in grants and rebates have been awarded, and awards will continue until the remaining \$47.9 million is spent. For more information visit [DEP's Driving PA Forward website](#).



DVRPC, 8th Floor
190 N Independence Mall West
Philadelphia, PA 19106-1520
215.592.1800 | dvrpc.org | airqualitypartnership.org

Connect With Us! [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Instagram](#) [LinkedIn](#) [YouTube](#)

DVRPC | Connecting People, Places & Prosperity in Greater Philadelphia | DVRPC fully complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related nondiscrimination mandates in all activities. For more information about DVRPC's Title VI Program or to obtain a Title VI Complaint Form, visit www.dvrpc.org/GetInvolved/TitleVI, call (215) 592-1800, or email public_affairs@dvrpc.org.