

# STATUS OF EXCEPTIONAL EVENTS REQUESTS & NEW PM2.5 STANDARD

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Agenda Item # 4



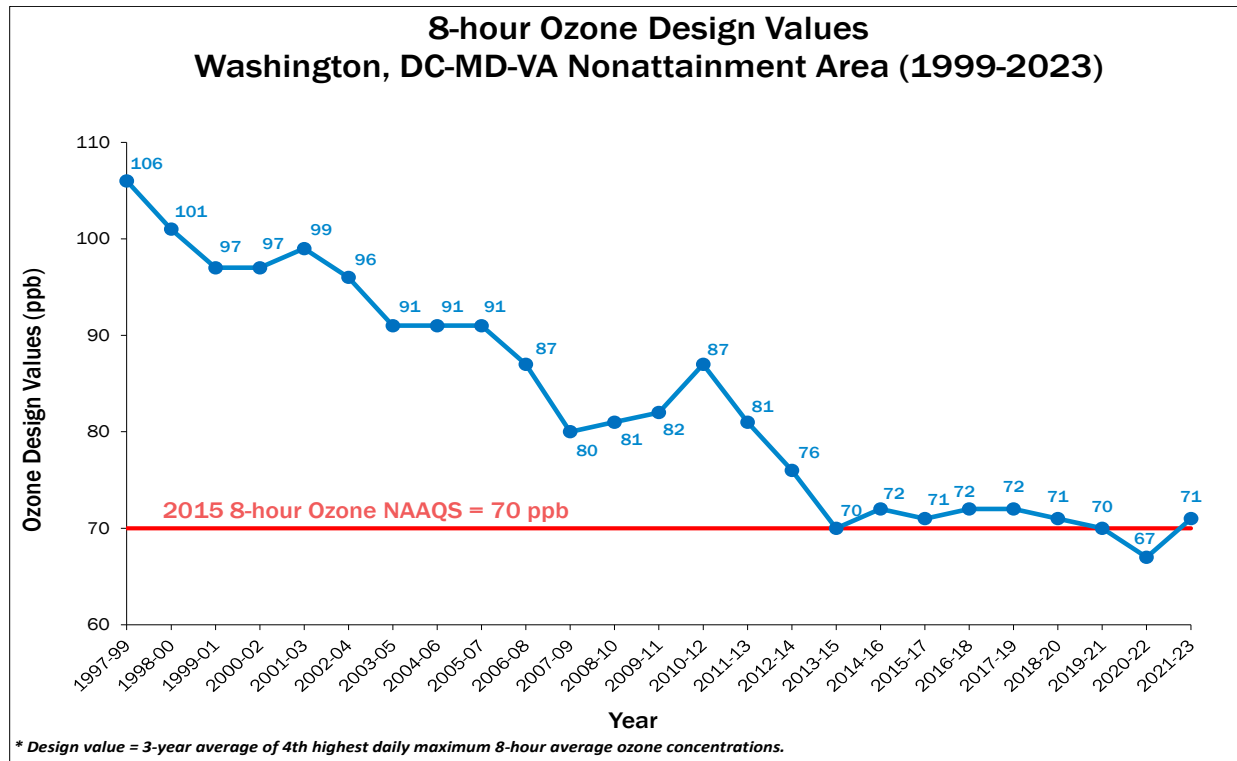
Metropolitan Washington  
**Council of Governments**

# Exceptional Events Data Waiver Request

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- The 2023 Ozone Season involved serious exceedances of the ozone NAAQS, in part due to smoke traveling to the region from the Canadian Wildfires.
- Due to the extreme air pollution levels from the wildfires, the region's draft Design Value (based on 3 consecutive years of data) went back to violating the 2015 ozone NAAQS.
- Fortunately, EPA has a process to flag and exclude unusually and atypically high air pollution concentrations resulting from those wildfires. If approved, this could solve the issue of the Design Value violating the NAAQS.
  - Process is called Exceptional Events Exemption Request and Determination

# Exceptional Events Data Waiver Request



\* 2021-23 data is preliminary and subject to change.



# Exceptional Events Exemption Request & Determination

- Exceptional Events – Exceptional Events are unusual or naturally occurring events (e.g, wildfires) that can affect air quality but are not reasonably controllable using techniques that tribal, state or local air agencies may implement in order to attain and maintain the National Ambient Air Quality Standards.
- EPA has a formal process for the States to flag and request that EPA make an Exceptional Events Determination for those days.
- Currently, States are in the process of preparing those analyses and expect to submit the Exceptional Events Exemption Request soon.
- If granted, the data for the days of concern will be excluded from the region’s Design Value calculation and the region will continue meeting the ozone NAAQS. Otherwise, the region will violate the NAAQS when the 2023 data becomes final next May.

# Status of EEE Requests

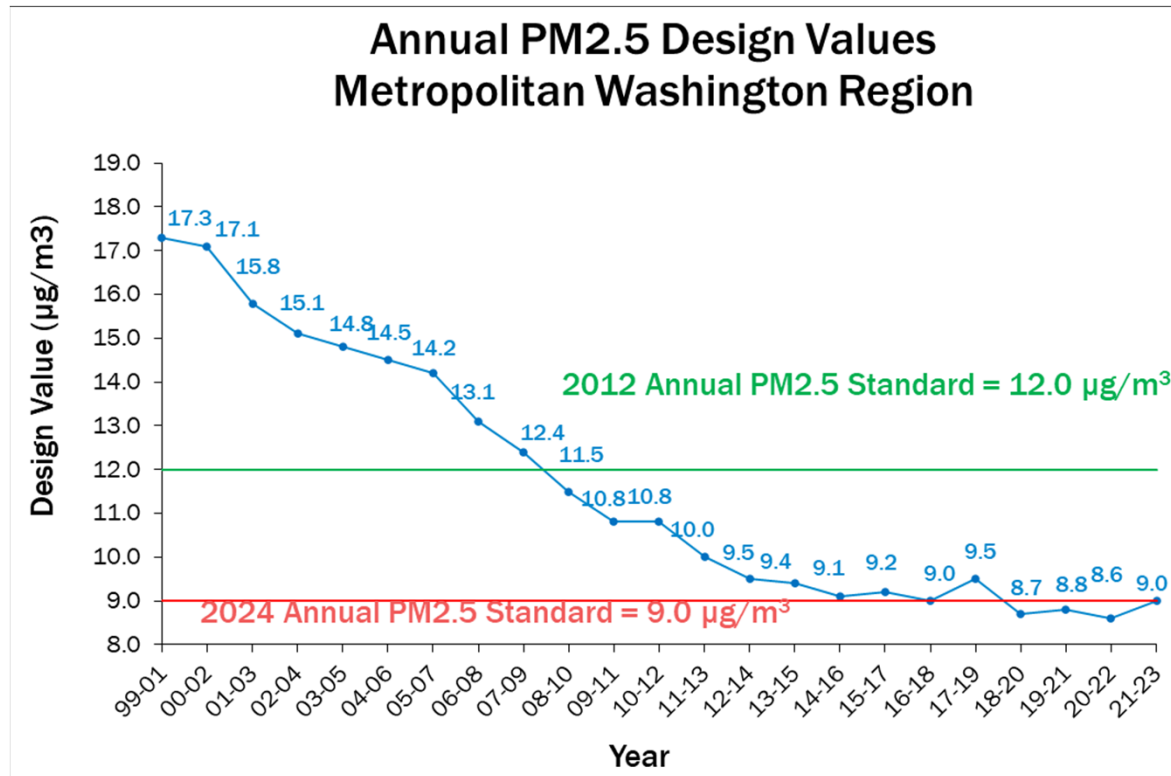
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- Only data with regulatory significance can be requested for exemption. Since PM2.5 design value was not violated, high PM2.5 data is not being requested for exemption by any jurisdiction.
- District – Data for 3 high ozone days being requested for exemption as only the District monitor showed violation of the 2015 ozone standard. Request document just went through public comment process and will be submitted to EPA shortly.
- Maryland & Virginia - Not requesting exemption as monitors in Maryland and Virginia portions of the Washington region did not show violation of the 2015 ozone standard.
- EPA is likely to approve requests this summer.

# New Tougher PM2.5 Standard

- EPA announced a new standard for fine particles (PM2.5) on February 7, 2024.
- This replaces the current annual primary standard set at 12.0 ug/m<sup>3</sup> with a tougher standard set at 9.0 ug/m<sup>3</sup>.
- There were no changes to other PM2.5 standards (daily primary PM2.5, annual & daily secondary PM2.5, and daily PM10).
- Following revisions made to the standard, changes were made to Air Quality Index (AQI).
- Changes were made to PM2.5 monitoring requirements. To enhance protection of air quality in communities subject to disproportionate air pollution risk, EPA is modifying the PM2.5 monitoring network design criteria to include an environmental justice factor. This factor will account for proximity of populations at increased risk of PM2.5-related health effects to air pollution sources of concern.
- Tougher standard will result in significant public health net benefits (\$46 billion in 2032). Health benefits will include up to 4,500 avoided premature deaths, 800,000 avoided cases of asthma symptoms, and 290,000 avoided lost workdays (in 2032). The costs of controls applied toward this standard were estimated to be \$590 million in 2032.

# Annual PM2.5 Design Value Trend



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# New AQI

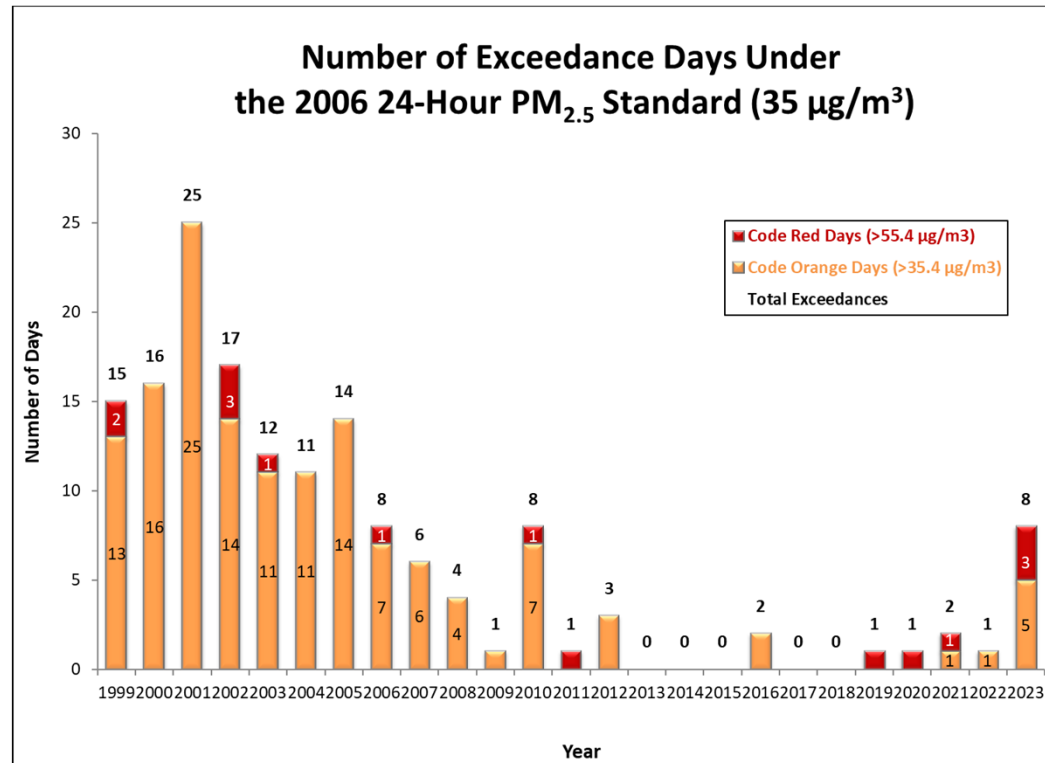
2023 AQI for Fine Particle Pollution			
<i>(Breakpoints are in micrograms per cubic meter)</i>			
AQI Category and Index Value	Previous AQI Category Breakpoints	Updated AQI Category Breakpoints	What changed?
<b>Good</b> (0 – 50)	0.0 to 12.0	0.0 to 9.0	EPA updated the breakpoint between Good and Moderate to reflect the updated annual standard of 9 micrograms per cubic meter
<b>Moderate</b> (51 – 100)	12.1 to 35.4	9.1 to 35.4	
<b>Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups</b> (101 – 150)	35.5 to 55.4	35.5 to 55.4	No change, because EPA retained the 24-hour fine PM standard of 35 micrograms per cubic meter.
<b>Unhealthy</b> (151 – 200)	55.5 to 150.4	55.5 to 125.4	EPA updated the breakpoints at the upper end of the unhealthy, very unhealthy, and hazardous categories based on scientific evidence about particle pollution and health. The Agency also collapsed two sets of breakpoints for the Hazardous category into one.
<b>Very Unhealthy</b> (201 – 300)	150.5 to 250.4	125.5 to 225.4	
<b>Hazardous</b> (301+)	250.5 to 350.4 and 350.5 to 500	225.5+	

Less code green days  
 More code yellow/red/purple days  
 No change in code orange days





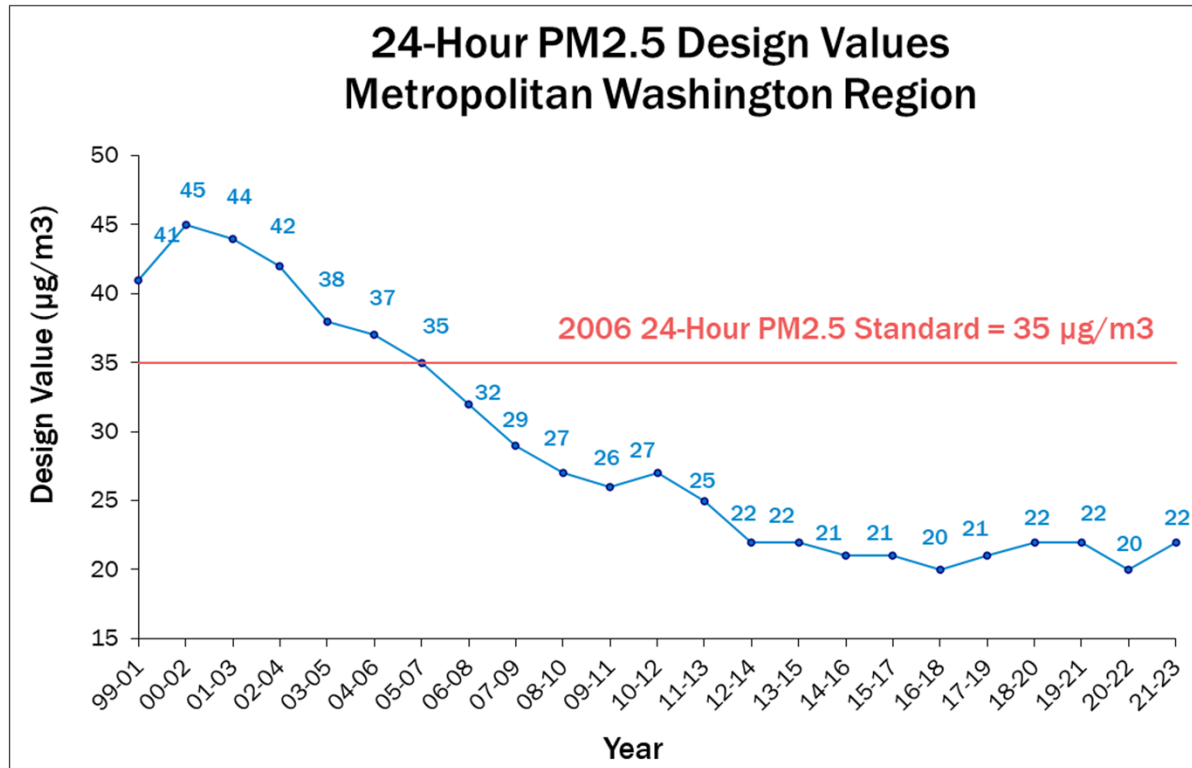
# PM2.5 Exceedance Trend



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# 24-Hour PM2.5 Design Value Trend



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