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## EPA Sets Stricter Air-Quality Standards Near Roads

By SIOBHAN HUGHES

WASHINGTON—The Obama administration set stricter limits on the amount of nitrogen dioxide in the air for short periods of time along busy roads and is requiring states to install monitoring equipment in big urban areas in an effort to crack down on pollution during periods of high traffic.

Vehicles are a major source of nitrogen dioxide, which can cause respiratory problems.

The Environmental Protection Agency issued the new standard Monday, seven months after first proposing new short-term limits. Businesses said the new standard is too strict while environmentalists said it didn't go far enough. The EPA set the acceptable amount of nitrogen dioxide in the atmosphere at 100 parts per billion over any hour-long period. The EPA last year proposed a limit of as little as 80 parts per billion.

The rules are years from having a practical effect. The EPA said that monitoring equipment must be in operation in 2013. After that, three years of data will be needed to determine which areas are out of compliance. Currently, Cook County, Ill., the home of Chicago, is the only urban area that measures emissions on an hourly basis and thus the only urban area known to be out of compliance with the new standard. Failure to comply could lead to the loss of federal highway funds.

Under the EPA rule, monitors must be located near roadways in cities with at least 500,000 residents.

"EPA is over-regulating this air quality standard for political—not health—reasons," the American Petroleum Institute, the oil industry's trade group, said in a statement. "Today's standard is bad public policy and does not justify the additional economic burdens placed on consumers, states and industry."

Frank O'Donnell, the president of Clean Air Watch, an environmental group, said, "This standard is a step forward for public health protection, but it is also a missed opportunity to do something better for the breathing public."

The EPA first set standards for nitrogen dioxide in 1971 to protect health and the environment. Until now, the EPA has set only annual limits.

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