

## EPA Ozone NAAQS Proposal Fact Sheet

### ACTION

- On June 20, 2007, EPA proposed to strengthen the national ambient air quality standards for ground-level ozone, the primary component of smog. The proposed revisions reflect new scientific evidence about ozone and its effects on people and public welfare.
- Breathing air containing ozone can reduce lung function, thereby aggravating asthma or other respiratory conditions. Ozone exposure has also been associated with increases in respiratory infection susceptibility, medicine use by asthmatics, doctors' visits, emergency department visits and hospital admissions. Ozone exposure also may contribute to premature death in people with heart and lung disease.
- Scientific evidence indicates that adverse public health effects occurs following exposure to ozone at levels below the current standard, particularly in those with respiratory illnesses.
- In addition, new scientific evidence since the last review shows that repeated exposure to low levels of ozone damages vegetation, trees and crops leading to increased susceptibility to disease, damaged foliage, and reduced crop yields.
- EPA's proposal would revise both ozone standards: the *primary* standard, designed to protect human health; and the *secondary* standard, designed to protect welfare (such as vegetation and crops). The existing primary and secondary standards, set in 1997, are identical: an 8-hour standard of 0.08 parts per million (ppm). (In practice, because of rounding, an area meets the standard if ozone levels are 0.084 ppm or lower.)

#### *Proposed revisions to the primary standard*

- EPA proposes to set the primary (health) standard to a level within the range of 0.070-0.075 ppm (70 -75 ppb) The Agency also requests comments on alternative levels of the 8-hour primary ozone standard, within a range from 0.060 ppm up to and including retention of the current standard (0.084 ppm). (EPA also proposes to specify the level of the primary standard to the third decimal place, because today's monitors can detect ozone that accurately.

#### *Proposed revisions to the secondary standard*

- EPA is proposing two options for the secondary standard:
  - One option would establish a new form of standard designed specifically to protect sensitive plants from damage caused by repeated ozone exposure throughout the growing season. This cumulative standard would

add daily ozone concentrations across a three-month period. EPA is proposing to set the level of the cumulative standard within the range of 7 to 21 ppm-hours.

- The other option would follow the current practice of making the secondary standard identical to the proposed primary 8-hour standard.
- EPA will take public comment for 90 days following publication of the proposal in the Federal Register. The agency also will hold four public hearings on the proposal in: Los Angeles and Philadelphia on Aug. 30, and Chicago and Houston on Sept. 5.
- EPA will issue final standards by March 12, 2008.

### **DETERMINING COMPLIANCE: THE FORM OF THE STANDARDS**

- When EPA sets air quality standards, it also must specify the measurement unit, or “form” of each standard, that the Agency will use to determine whether an area is meeting the standards.
- For the primary ozone standard, an area meets the standard if the three-year average of the annual fourth-highest reading at a particular monitor is less than or equal to the level of the standard.
- EPA is proposing a new and distinct form for the secondary standard. The form, called W126, is designed to account for the cumulative effects of ozone on vegetation during the three months of the year when ozone concentrations are highest. The form focuses on the highest exposure during the growing season.
- If EPA finalizes the W126 option, an area would meet the secondary standard if the W126 value is less than or equal to the level of the standard. If the agency finalizes the section option proposed, compliance with the secondary standard would be based on compliance with the primary 8-hour standard.

### **ESTIMATED TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTING THE PROPOSED STANDARDS**

- EPA will issue final standards by March 12, 2008. Based on that date, EPA estimates the following implementation schedule:
  - *By June 2009*: States make recommendations for areas to be designated attainment and nonattainment.
  - *By June 2010*: EPA makes final designations of attainment and nonattainment areas. Those designations would become effective 60 days after publication in the Federal Register.
  - *2013*: State Implementation Plans, outlining how states will reduce pollution to meet the standards, are due to EPA (three years after designations).
  - *2013 to 2030*: States are required to meet the standard, with deadlines depending on the severity of the problem.

## HOW TO COMMENT

- EPA will accept public comments for 90 days after the proposed revisions to the ozone standards are published in the Federal Register.
- Comments should be identified by Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2005 -0172 and submitted by one of the following methods:
  - Federal eRulemaking Portal (<http://www.regulations.gov>),
  - e-mail ([a-and-r-docket@epa.gov](mailto:a-and-r-docket@epa.gov)),
  - Mail (EPA Docket Center, Environmental Protection Agency, Mail code 6102T,  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20460), or
  - Hand delivery (EPA Docket Center, Environmental Protection Agency,  
Room  
3334, 1301 Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC).