

# Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee

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March 27, 2013

Acting Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Ariel Rios Building  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Acting Administrator:

I am writing on behalf of the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC) to urge you to propose and finalize the Tier 3 vehicle emissions and gasoline standards as soon as possible.

MWAQC is certified by the governors of Maryland and Virginia and the mayor of the District of Columbia to develop regional ground-level ozone and PM<sub>2.5</sub> air quality plans and strategies for the Washington, DC-MD-VA non-attainment area.

The Washington region has made great strides in cleaning the air thereby, reducing the health impacts of poor air quality, which cause a number of respiratory problems (e.g., asthma) and premature death. It has done so by lowering emissions of pollutants that produce smog and fine particles in the atmosphere. As a result, the region has met the annual fine particle standards, which were published in 1997 (15 ug/m<sup>3</sup>) and 2013 (12 ug/m<sup>3</sup>) as well as daily fine particle standards, which were published in 1997 (65 ug/m<sup>3</sup>) and 2006 (35 ug/m<sup>3</sup>). Besides this, the region has also met the previous 1-hour ozone standard (0.12 ppm) published in 1979. However, there are tougher challenges ahead for the Washington region. The region needs to meet the current ozone standard (0.075 ppm) by 2015 and also needs to make sure that the region remains in attainment for the current fine particle standards (annual: 12 ug/m<sup>3</sup>, daily: 35 ug/m<sup>3</sup>). EPA is also planning to propose a possibly tougher ozone standard this year. EPA may also further tighten the fine particle standard in the future.

In view of the challenges ahead for meeting and/or maintaining the tougher federal ozone and fine particle standards, the Washington region needs to reduce the emissions of pollutants producing ozone and fine particles (VOC, NO<sub>x</sub>, PM<sub>2.5</sub>, and SO<sub>2</sub>) significantly. The Tier 3 rule will help the Washington region immensely as it will provide cleaner gasoline and vehicles. This will also help the three jurisdictions in this region as they implement strategies to meet and/or maintain the above mentioned federal standards.

Passenger vehicles are the largest emitters of nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) and one of the largest emitters of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), carbon monoxide (CO), and PM<sub>2.5</sub> in the Washington region. A study by the National Association of Clean Air Agencies (NACAA) estimated that the Tier 3 program can reduce gasoline vehicle emissions of nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, and volatile organic compounds by 29, 38 and 26 percent respectively.

Reductions in emissions of the above pollutants will cause reduction in the levels of ozone, fine particles, and carbon monoxide. Clearly, implementation of the Tier 3 rule will lead to significantly cleaner air in the Washington region, providing important health benefits to millions of people.

MWAQC urges you to finalize this rule as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Hon. Leta Mach, Chair  
Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee