

EPA'S PROPOSAL TO UPDATE THE AIR QUALITY STANDARDS FOR PARTICLE POLLUTION: MONITORING, DESIGNATIONS AND PERMITTING REQUIREMENTS

On June 14, 2012, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [proposed to strengthen](#) the nation's air quality standards for fine particle pollution to improve public health and visibility. Exposure to particle pollution causes premature death and is linked to a variety of significant health problems. Particle pollution also harms public welfare, including by causing haze in cities and some of our nation's most treasured national parks.

EPA has issued a number of rules that will help states meet the proposed revised standards by making significant strides toward reducing fine particle pollution.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO PM_{2.5} MONITORING REQUIREMENTS

- As part of the [proposed revisions to the PM_{2.5} standards](#), EPA is proposing several updates to monitoring requirements for fine particles, including a requirement for monitoring along heavily traveled roads in large urban areas. Pollution can be higher along these roads as a result of emissions from cars, and from heavy duty diesel trucks and buses.
- EPA is proposing to **require near-roadway PM_{2.5} monitoring** at one location in each urban area (a core-based statistical area, or CBSA) with a population of 1 million or more. These monitors, to be located at near-road monitoring sites also measuring nitrogen dioxide or carbon monoxide, would have to be operational no later than Jan. 1, 2015.
 - EPA is not proposing to increase the size of the national PM_{2.5} monitoring network, which consists of about 900 monitors; the agency anticipates that states would be able to relocate existing monitors (about 52 total) to meet the near-roadway requirement.
- Data from these monitors, along with other monitors in the area, could be used to determine whether the area is meeting both the annual and 24-hour standards. However, data from these monitors would not be available in time for use in making initial attainment and nonattainment designations.
- Other proposed updates to the monitoring and data handling requirements include:
 - Using data from existing Chemical Speciation Network or the EPA/National Park Service IMPROVE monitoring network, to determine whether an area meets the proposed secondary PM_{2.5} visibility index standard.

- Updates to data handling requirements to reflect proposed revisions to the standards, and to clarify existing requirements.
- EPA is not proposing any changes to monitoring requirements for coarse particles (PM₁₀).

DESIGNATING ATTAINMENT AND NONATTAINMENT AREAS

- Improving air quality is a partnership between the federal government, states and tribes. EPA will work closely with states, local and tribal air agencies to implement the particle pollution standards.
- Once EPA sets a new air quality standard, or revises an existing standard, we designate areas as meeting the standards (attainment areas) or not meeting them (nonattainment areas). The agency works closely with states as it determines attainment and nonattainment boundaries.
- States with nonattainment areas must then develop state implementation plans (SIPs) showing how they will meet the standards. Tribes may, but are not required to, develop their own plans for nonattainment areas in Indian country. Where necessary, EPA will develop plans for any tribal area that chooses not to develop its own plans.
- EPA will take final action on the standards by Dec. 14, 2012. Based on that schedule, the agency anticipates the following schedule for designating areas for the revised annual PM_{2.5} standards and/or a separate secondary PM_{2.5} visibility index:
 - By December 2013, states (and any tribes that choose to do so), make recommendations for areas to be designated.
 - By August 2014, EPA responds to states' and tribes' initial recommendations for attainment and nonattainment areas. States and tribes then will have the opportunity to comment on any modifications to their recommendations, and to provide new information and analyses to EPA if appropriate.
 - By December 2014, EPA makes final designations; those designations would likely become effective in early 2015.
 - 2018: Implementation plans, outlining how states or tribes will reduce pollution to meet the standards, are due to EPA (three years after designations). State plans can include federal measures, as well as any needed local measures, to demonstrate that an area will meet the standards.

- 2020: States are required to meet the primary standards. States must meet the health standards “as expeditiously as practicable” but not later than five years after designations. A state may request a possible extension to 2025, depending on the severity of an area’s fine particle pollution problems and the availability of pollution controls.
- The Clean Air Act does not specify a date for states to meet secondary PM_{2.5} standards; EPA and states determine that date through the implementation planning process.
- Recent Clean Air Act rules are projected to help states meet the proposed standards by dramatically cutting pollution both regionally and across the country. These rules include rules to reduce pollution from power plants, clean diesel rules for vehicles, and rules to reduce pollution from stationary diesel engines.
- The agency intends to propose additional guidance or regulations related to state implementation requirements for the revised PM standards as necessary. These guidance documents or rules would address SIP requirements, implementation of the proposed separate secondary PM_{2.5} visibility index standard and permitting requirements related to the revised standards.

PERMITTING REQUIREMENTS

- As part of this rule, EPA is proposing certain revisions to its regulations for preconstruction permitting to ensure that changes to the PM standards will not delay pending permits, and to reduce potential burdens to permit applicants. These revisions would apply to Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) permits, which ensure that emissions from the addition of new or modified sources of pollution, such as factories, industrial boilers or power plants, do not significantly worsen air quality in areas with clean air.
- EPA will consider issuing additional guidance or regulations as necessary related to permitting requirements for the proposed standards, such as permit modeling guidance for PM_{2.5}.

Proposed grandfathering provision

- To receive a PSD permit, a project must not cause or contribute to a violation of any NAAQS or any maximum allowable pollution increase in areas with clean air. These requirements generally apply to the air quality standards that are in place at the time the permit is issued.
- To ensure that pending permits are not unreasonably delayed because of changes to the fine particle standards, EPA is proposing to grandfather permit applications if a draft permit or preliminary determination has been issued for public comment by the date the revised

PM standards become effective. This provision would not apply to NAAQS for other pollutants.

- Draft permits that have not reached this stage would have to demonstrate compliance with the revised standards.
- The proposed grandfathering provision would become part of EPA permitting rules, but also could apply to permits issued by states with approved PSD programs.

Surrogacy approach for air quality analyses for proposed visibility index

- The PSD program requires permit applicants to conduct an air quality analysis to demonstrate that a project's proposed emissions increases will not cause or contribute to a violation of any applicable NAAQS.
- EPA believes that requiring separate PSD air quality analyses for the proposed separate secondary PM_{2.5} visibility index could present practical difficulties for industry that would impose unreasonable costs, uncertainty and permitting delays. To minimize these difficulties, the agency intends to implement a "surrogacy approach" that would allow permit applicants to instead rely on their analyses demonstrating that PM_{2.5} emissions increases would not cause or contribute to a violation of the 24-hour primary standard.
- EPA believes this approach will ensure that new or modified pollution sources will not cause or contribute to a violation of the proposed visibility index.
- The Agency is seeking comment on this approach and the underlying technical analysis. EPA plans to finalize any surrogacy approach by the time the final standards are issued.

MORE INFORMATION:

- To read the proposed standards and additional summaries, visit <http://www.epa.gov/airquality/particlepollution/actions.html>
- For information on the designation process for PM_{2.5} standards, visit <http://www.epa.gov/pmdesignations/>.
- For information on EPA's preconstruction permitting program, visit <http://www.epa.gov/nsr/>