

# Fact Sheet — Air Quality Designations for the 2008 Lead (Pb) National Ambient Air Quality Standards

## ACTIONS

- On November 8, 2011, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) identified or “designated” 5 areas as not meeting the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Lead (Pb). The EPA significantly strengthened the Pb standards to 0.15 micrograms per cubic meter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ) in 2008.
- Today’s action designates 5 areas, including 5 partial counties, as “nonattainment areas.” The EPA has accepted the Governor’s recommendations for these nonattainment areas based on 2008-2010 ambient air quality data. This action includes a necessary expansion of the boundary of an area designated nonattainment last year.
- In addition to the 5 nonattainment designations, the EPA is designating three areas (Knox County, TN; an area surrounding Hayden, AZ; and Orange County, NY) as unclassifiable. Although available preliminary ambient monitoring data from early 2011 suggests possible violations of the 2008 Pb standards in these areas, it is not sufficient for to designate the areas as nonattainment.
- Finally, the EPA is designating the remainder of the country unclassifiable/attainment for the 2008 Pb standards. No parts of Indian Country are being designated nonattainment or unclassifiable.
- The nonattainment areas will need to develop and implement plans to reduce pollution to meet the Pb standards. The EPA based these designations on the most recent set of air quality monitoring data from 2008-2010 as well as other factors, analytical tools, and technical information.
- The EPA designated areas for the revised Pb standard in two rounds. In the first round, issued on November 16, 2010, the EPA designated 16 areas as nonattainment for the Pb standards based on data from 2007-2009. For all other areas, the EPA deferred designations until today’s action, so that data from the newly deployed monitors that began operation in 2010 could be considered in making appropriate designation decisions.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR NONATTAINMENT AREAS

- Nonattainment areas include areas with monitors that violate a standard and the nearby areas that contribute to that violation. The Clean Air Act (CAA) requires state, and/or local governments to take steps to control pollution in Pb nonattainment areas. Those steps may include stricter controls on industrial facilities.

- State and local governments must detail these steps in plans that demonstrate how they will meet the Pb standards. Those plans are known as state implementation plans, or SIPs. States must submit their plans to the EPA within 18 months after the effective date of the agency's final designations i.e., by June 30, 2013.

Nonattainment areas are required to meet the standards as expeditiously as practicable, but not later than December 31, 2016.

## **BACKGROUND**

- The CAA requires the EPA to issue designations after the agency sets a new National Ambient Air Quality Standard or revises an existing standard. The EPA formally designates areas as “nonattainment” (not meeting the standard), “unclassifiable/attainment” (meeting the standard or insufficient data but expected to be meeting the standard), or “unclassifiable” (insufficient data but significant likelihood of not meeting the standard).
- On October 15, 2008, the EPA revised the level of the primary (health-based) and secondary (welfare-based) standards for Pb from 1.5 micrograms per cubic meter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ) to 0.15  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  measured as total suspended particles (TSP).
- The EPA also revised the averaging time and form of the lead standards. The calculation method for the averaging time is a “rolling” three-month period with a maximum (not-to-be-exceeded) form, evaluated over a three-year period.
- In conjunction with strengthening the lead standards, the EPA improved the existing lead monitoring network by requiring monitors to be placed in areas with sources such as industrial facilities that emit one ton per year (tpy) or more of lead beginning January 1, 2010 and near 0.5 tpy or more sources and in certain non-source oriented locations by December 27, 2011.
- In November 2008, the EPA provided guidance to states and tribes for recommending nonattainment area boundaries for the Pb standards. The EPA also used these factors and additional analytical tools (such as air quality modeling), and other relevant information, to make final decisions on nonattainment area boundaries:
  - Emission data
  - Air quality data
  - Population density and degree of urbanization (including commercial development)
  - Growth rates and patterns
  - Meteorology (weather/transport patterns)
  - Geography/topography (mountain ranges or other air basin boundaries)
  - Jurisdictional boundaries (e.g., counties, air districts, reservations, metropolitan planning organizations)
  - Level of control of emission sources

- States and tribes were given an opportunity to update their recommendation letters, by December 15, 2010, for deferred areas for the EPA's consideration in the second round of designations, based on the most recent 3 years of air quality monitoring data from 2008-2010. The EPA notified states and tribes of our preliminary responses to their recommendations on June 15, 2011.
- The EPA also provided the public with a 30-day opportunity to comment on the Agency's proposed modifications to the state and tribal recommendations and to offer additional information that could help establish the final nonattainment area boundaries.

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

- For more information on the designation process for the Pb standards go to EPA's web site at [www.epa.gov/leaddesignations](http://www.epa.gov/leaddesignations).