

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

FACT SHEET

EXTENSION OF DEADLINE FOR PROMULGATING DESIGNATIONS FOR THE 2008 OZONE NATIONAL AMBIENT AIR QUALITY STANDARDS

ACTION

- On January 6, 2010, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) extended the deadline for designating areas for the March 2008 national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) for ground-level ozone. The new deadline for area designations is March 12, 2011.
- After EPA establishes or revises a NAAQS, EPA must take steps to ensure that the standard is met. The first step is to identify areas of the country as meeting or not meeting the new or revised NAAQS. This step is known as the initial area designations.
- According to the Clean Air Act, EPA must complete the initial area designations in two years. However, EPA may extend that period up to one year in the event the Agency has insufficient information.
- EPA is reconsidering the ground-level ozone standards set in 2008. Based on the scientific and technical record from the most recent review, EPA is proposing to set different primary and secondary NAAQS to protect public health and welfare. EPA intends to complete this reconsideration of the 2008 ozone NAAQS by August 31, 2010.
- Because of the significant uncertainty that the ozone NAAQS reconsideration creates regarding the continued applicability of the 2008 NAAQS, EPA has determined that there is insufficient information to complete designations for those standards by March 12, 2010. Extending the designations deadline until March 12, 2011, will allow EPA to complete its reconsideration of the 2008 ozone NAAQS before determining whether designations for those standards are necessary.
- If, as a result of the reconsideration, EPA issues different ozone standards in 2010, the new ozone standards would replace the 2008 ozone NAAQS and implementation requirements associated with the replaced 2008 ozone NAAQS, including area designations, would no longer apply. Instead, EPA would begin a new process to designate areas for the 2010 ozone NAAQS on an accelerated schedule.

BACKGROUND

- EPA is reconsidering the 2008 ozone NAAQS to ensure that two of the nation's most important air quality standards are clearly grounded in science, protect public health with an adequate margin of safety, and are sufficient to protect the environment. The ozone standards set in 2008 were not as protective as recommended by EPA's panel of science advisors, the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee.

- The primary ozone standard is designed to protect public health with an adequate margin of safety. Breathing air containing ozone can reduce lung function and increase respiratory symptoms, thereby aggravating asthma or other respiratory conditions. Ozone exposure also has been associated with increased susceptibility to respiratory infections, medication use by asthmatics, doctor visits, and emergency department visits and hospital admissions for individuals with respiratory disease. Ozone exposure also increases the risk of premature death.
- The secondary ozone standard is designed to protect against adverse welfare effects, including impacts on vegetation and forested ecosystems. Repeated ozone exposure can interfere with a plant's ability to produce and store food, leading to reduced tree growth; reduced crop yields; visibly injured leaves; and increased susceptibility to disease, damage from insects, and harsh weather.
- After EPA designates ozone nonattainment areas, the states are required to develop implementation plans outlining how the areas will attain and maintain the standards by reducing air pollutant emissions contributing to ground-level ozone concentrations.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- To download a copy of this notice, go to EPA's Web Site at: www.epa.gov/ozonedesignations.
- The notice is also available electronically at www.regulations.gov, EPA's electronic public docket and comment system. The docket number for this action is Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2008-0476.