

U.S. EPA Fact Sheet

Proposed Determinations of Failure to Attain the 1-hour Ozone Standard for San Joaquin Valley, South Coast and Southeast Desert

September 1, 2011

Summary

- EPA is proposing to determine that the San Joaquin Valley (SJV), South Coast (SC) and the Southeast Desert 1-hour ozone nonattainment areas in California have failed to attain the 1-hour ozone standard by their required deadlines.
- In 1997, the EPA established a new 8-hour ozone standard (0.08 ppm), which replaced the older 1-hour ozone standard (0.12 ppm). The 8-hour standard is more protective of human health because it addresses the impacts of exposure over longer periods of time.
- The 1-hour ozone standard was revoked on June 15, 2005. However, as required by the Clean Air Act (CAA) to prevent backsliding in air quality, EPA is continuing to implement certain CAA requirements for the 1-hour ozone standard by proposing to determine that the SJV, SC and Southeast Desert failed to attain the one-hour ozone standard by their applicable attainment dates.
 - If finalized, today's determinations would ensure that the requirements are met for contingency measures and fee programs in these three areas. There would therefore be no backsliding on air quality measures as a result of the transition from the 1-hour ozone standard to the 8-hour ozone standard.
 - These requirements will continue to be required until the areas achieve the 1-hour ozone standard.

Background

- Ozone pollution can cause inflammation and irritation of respiratory airways, coughing, shortness of breath, reduced lung function, asthma symptoms and increased hospitalizations for respiratory causes. Children and elderly are most impacted by ozone pollution.
- In 1997, EPA chose an 8-hour instead of a 1-hour standard, because ozone can produce effects of concern at lower concentrations for prolonged exposure of 6 to 8 hours. The members of the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee, who advise the Administrator on setting standards, were unanimous in recommending a change from a 1-hour to an 8-hour standard.
- EPA will soon take action on the 1997 8-hour ozone plans for the SC and SJV.
- Ground-level ozone is formed when nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) react in the atmosphere in the presence of sunlight. NO_x and VOCs are called ozone precursors. Motor vehicle exhaust, industrial emissions, and chemical solvents are the major sources of these chemicals. Ozone pollution is a concern especially when the weather conditions needed to form it, lots of sun and hot temperatures occur.

Next Steps

- EPA is providing a 30-day public comment period on this action.

For More Information

<http://www.epa.gov/region9/air/actions/ca.html>