

## U.S. EPA FACT SHEET

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### **Proposed Approval of the South Coast 1-Hour Ozone Attainment Demonstration, Proposed Approval of the South Coast 1-Hour and 8-Hour Ozone VMT Offset Demonstrations, and Interim Final Determination to Defer Sanctions**

May 5, 2014

#### **Summary**

- Today, EPA is announcing a series of actions affecting the South Coast ozone nonattainment area for both the 1-hour and the 1997 8-hour ozone national air quality standards.
  - EPA is proposing to approve California's new plan for attainment of the 1-hour ozone standard in the South Coast extreme ozone nonattainment area. The revised plan demonstrates attainment of the 1-hour ozone standard in the South Coast nonattainment area in 2022.
  - EPA is also proposing to approve vehicle miles traveled (VMT) emissions offset demonstrations, for the 1-hour and the 1997 8-hour ozone standards, showing that emissions resulting from increased VMT and vehicle trips in the South Coast have been adequately offset by transportation control strategies and transportation control measures that reduce emissions.
  - Lastly, because of the proposed approval of the VMT offset demonstrations, EPA is issuing an interim final determination to defer sanctions resulting from EPA's disapproval of the previously submitted VMT offset demonstrations for the South Coast. The sanctions were scheduled to go into effect in October 2014.
- Although EPA has replaced the 1-hour ozone standard with a more health protective 8-hour standard, the Clean Air Act (CAA) requires that California have approved plans in place for attaining the 1-hour standard in 1-hour ozone nonattainment areas.
- Air quality has been steadily improving in the South Coast. Since 1985 there have been 95% fewer exceedances of the 1-hour ozone standard. See trend chart below.

#### **Background**

- Breathing air containing ozone can reduce lung function and increase respiratory symptoms, aggravating asthma or other respiratory conditions. Ozone exposure also has been associated with increased susceptibility to respiratory infections, medication use by asthmatics, and emergency department visits and hospital admissions for individuals with respiratory disease. Ozone exposure may also contribute to premature death, especially in people with heart and lung disease.
- Ground-level ozone is formed when nitrogen oxides (NOx) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) react in the atmosphere in the presence of sunlight. NOx 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.
- In 2000, EPA approved California's 1997/1999 revised plan for attaining the 1-hour ozone standard in the South Coast. In 2003 and 2008, California submitted updates to that plan, which EPA partially approved and partially disapproved in 2009.
- In 2012 the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals found that the 2003 and 2008 revisions called into question the 1997/1999 plan's adequacy and directed EPA to take further action to ensure that the South Coast has an approved plan demonstrating attainment of the 1-hour ozone standard, consistent with CAA requirements.

- As a result, on January 7, 2013, EPA published a final rule requiring California to submit revision to correct the deficiencies in the State Implementation Plan (SIP). This is referred to as a SIP call.
- On March 28, 2013 and in response to a remand by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in *Association of Irrigated Residents v. EPA*, EPA finalized the withdrawal and disapproval of previously submitted South Coast VMT emissions offset demonstrations. This action triggered deadlines for a new submittal by the State and approval by EPA in order to avoid sanctions.
- Today's proposed approvals are in response to EPA's SIP call and disapprovals and California's subsequent submittal of a SIP revision addressing the deficiencies.
- EPA is providing a comment period of 30 days on the proposed rules and interim final rule. We will respond to all comments in the final rules.
- For the interim final rule, if no comments are submitted that change our assessment, then all sanctions and sanction clocks will be permanently terminated on the effective date of the interim final rule.

For More Information visit: <http://www.epa.gov/region9/air/actions/ca.html>

Figure 1: There has been a 95% reduction in the number of 1-hour ozone exceedances in the South Coast since 1985.

