

**Fact Sheet:
First Draft Staff Paper for Ozone**

Today's Action

On November 14, 2005, the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) released documents that are part of its regularly scheduled review of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for ozone (O₃). These documents are the second step in the extensive scientific and technical assessment process EPA uses to review any NAAQS.

- These documents include the first draft:
 - Staff Paper -- "Review of National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Ozone,"
 - Human Exposure Analysis, and
 - Health Risk Assessment.
- The first draft Staff Paper includes scientific and technical information about O₃-related health and welfare effects, initial results from a human exposure analysis and health risk assessment, and discussion of a planned vegetation-related environmental assessment.
- This first draft Staff Paper does NOT contain staff conclusions or recommendations about whether to retain or revise the existing primary (health-based) and secondary (welfare-based) O₃ standards. Initial staff conclusions and recommendations on the O₃ NAAQS will be presented in the next draft Staff Paper, which is expected to be released in spring 2006.
- Also released today are a draft Human Exposure Analysis and a draft Health Risk Assessment, which describe the methods used and present initial results of assessments of population exposure to O₃ and health risks associated with exposure to O₃, respectively. EPA staff will complete these analyses and present additional results in the next draft of the Staff Paper.
- These documents are the second step in the extensive scientific and technical assessment process EPA uses to review any NAAQS.
- The first step in that process is the preparation of an Air Quality Criteria Document. The Criteria Document is a comprehensive assessment of scientific data about the health and environmental effects associated with the pollutant under review -- in this case, O₃. EPA's Office of Research and Development released the Second External Review Draft of the O₃ Criteria Document in August, 2005. The first draft Staff Paper consists of initial assessments of the most relevant information in the draft Criteria Document.
- The preliminary draft Staff Paper is now available on EPA's Web site at: http://www.epa.gov/ttn/naaqs/standards/ozone/s_o3_cr_sp.html.

- EPA will accept public comment on the documents issued today until December 30, 2005.

Next Steps

- The Clean Air Science Advisory Committee (CASAC), a Congressionally mandated group of independent scientific and technical experts, will review the second external review draft Criteria Document and will provide a consultation on the first draft Staff Paper at a meeting in Durham, North Carolina on December 6-8, 2005. This meeting is open to the public.
- EPA will carefully review and consider comments received during both the public comment period and the December CASAC meeting on these documents.
- EPA anticipates release of a final Criteria Document in February 2006.
- EPA will revise the first draft Staff Paper, taking into account CASAC and public comments, and anticipates release of the next draft in spring 2006.

Background

- The Clean Air Act requires EPA to set National Ambient Air Quality Standards for O₃ and five other major pollutants considered harmful to public health and the environment. (The others are particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and lead.)
- The law also requires EPA to periodically review the standards to ensure that they provide adequate health and environmental protection, and to update those standards as necessary.
- Tropospheric (ground-level) O₃ is formed by reactions in the troposphere of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and nitrogen oxides (NO_x), which are emitted from numerous and diverse mobile (e.g., cars, trucks) and stationary (e.g., power plants) sources. These reactions are most likely to produce high levels of ambient O₃ during periods of high temperature and high solar radiation during the summer months.
- EPA last updated the O₃ standards in 1997; the decision to revise the standards was challenged in court by a number of parties. The Supreme Court unanimously upheld the constitutionality of the 1970 Clean Air Act provision that authorizes EPA to set NAAQS to protect public health and welfare. The Supreme Court also affirmed that the Clean Air Act requires EPA to set ambient air quality standards at levels necessary to protect the public health and welfare, without considering the economic costs of implementing the standards.