

August 10, 2001

FACT SHEET

Limited Maintenance Plans for Areas Seeking Attainment Designations for Particulate Matter

TODAY'S ACTION

- ! The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is issuing guidance to streamline the process for a state or tribe to redesignate an area from “nonattainment” to “attainment” of the national ambient air quality standards for PM₁₀. Airborne particles 10 micrometers in diameter and smaller are referred to as PM₁₀. The policy will apply to those areas of the country classified as “moderate” for PM₁₀.
- ! If an area meets the criteria listed in this policy, the responsible state or tribe may submit a maintenance plan with the redesignation request that is more streamlined than EPA would previously have permitted. This new option is being termed a limited maintenance plan (LMP).
- ! Areas classified as moderate for PM₁₀ that do not meet the criteria of this policy, and all PM₁₀ nonattainment areas classified as “serious”, should submit maintenance plans that meet EPA’s guidelines for submission of a full maintenance plan as described in September 1992 EPA guidance.
- ! This policy streamlines the full maintenance plan requirements by not requiring air quality modeling estimates that clean air can be maintained, a projection of emissions of airborne particles into the future, or some of the standard analyses to determine conformity with the air quality standards.

BACKGROUND

- ! The Clean Air Act requires EPA to set national ambient air quality standards for particulate matter and five other major pollutants considered harmful to public health and the environment. (The others are ozone, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and lead.)
- ! Particulate matter includes both solid particles and liquid droplets found in the air. PM

can be emitted directly into the air from man-made sources such as automobiles and industrial boilers or natural sources such as wild fires. Particles also form as a result of chemical reactions between other pollutants emitted into the air.

- ! Although airborne particles come in a wide range of sizes, particles less than 10 micrometers in diameter tend to pose the greatest health risk, because they can accumulate in the human respiratory system.
- ! Under the Clean Air Act, EPA designates as “attainment” those areas of the country that meet the human health based standards for PM_{10} . Areas that do not meet the standards are designated as nonattainment. Nonattainment areas are then classified as “moderate” or “serious.”
- ! Once states or tribes improve air quality in nonattainment areas to meet the national ambient air quality standards, they may request that EPA redesignate the areas to attainment. The redesignation requirements that the state or tribe must ensure are met before it requests redesignation are: the national ambient air quality standard has been attained, the area has a fully approved State Implementation Plan (SIP), the improvement in air quality must be due to permanent and enforceable emissions reductions, and the area has a fully approved maintenance plan.
- ! A maintenance plan should identify the level of air emissions from cars, industry and other sources of air pollution in the area which is sufficient to attain the national air quality standards. The plan must also show through a modeling demonstration that the area will maintain clean air for at least 10 years after redesignation. Additionally, a list of air pollution control measures that the state or tribe may implement should it’s monitoring network detect that the air quality standards are not being met should also be included.
- ! EPA ’s September 4, 1992 guidance, “Procedures for Processing Requests to Redesignate Areas to Attainment”, spells out the requirements of a full maintenance plan.

ELIGIBILITY FOR THE PLAN

- ! In order to be eligible for this program, an area should be attaining the national ambient air quality standards for PM_{10} and the average PM_{10} design value for the area, based upon the most recent 5 years of air quality data at all monitors in the area, should be at or

- below an allowable limit. The design value is the mathematically derived pollutant concentration at a given site that is used to determine the level of control needed to reduce pollutant concentrations enough to attain the national ambient air quality standard.
- ! Another criterion is related to mobile source emissions. The area should expect only limited growth in on-road motor vehicle PM₁₀ emissions (including fugitive dust). It is important to consider the impact of future transportation growth in the LMP, since the level of PM-10 emissions (especially from fugitive dust) is related to the level of growth in vehicle miles traveled

 - ! If the state or tribe determines that the area in question meets the above criteria, it may select the LMP option. Any area that does not meet these criteria should submit a full maintenance plan that is consistent with the Agency's September 1992 guidance on maintenance plans in order to be redesignated to attainment.

 - ! If the LMP option is selected, the state or tribe should continue to meet the qualifying criteria until EPA has redesignated the area to attainment. If an area no longer qualifies for the LMP option because a change in air quality affects the average design values before the redesignation takes effect, EPA will expect the area to submit a full maintenance plan.

 - ! EPA requires that states or tribes participating in the LMP recalculate the area's PM₁₀ design value annually to keep track of the area's air quality levels. If the levels rise above the limits qualifying the area for the LMP, the state or tribe must act to lower them. If that action fails, the state or tribe must submit a full maintenance plan.

BENEFITS

- ! Many PM₁₀ areas have been meeting the standard for five years or more and have a low risk of exceeding it in the future. A policy was needed that would allow states, tribes and EPA to deal more efficiently with low risk areas so that our limited resources can be focused on higher priority areas, including areas that still are not meeting the standard or at risk of continued nonattainment.

FOR MORE INFORMATION...

- ! The memorandum outlining the Limited Maintenance Plan Option for Moderate PM₁₀ Nonattainment Areas is available on the World Wide Web at:
<http://www.epa.gov/ttn/oarp/gt1p gm.html>

! For questions about this guidance, call Gary Blais with EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards at 919-541-3223.