4-9-99

FACT SHEET

CHANGES TO AIR QUALITY MONITORING METHODS FOR PARTICULATE MATTER

TODAY'S ACTION

- In today's action, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing to:

    1.) Eliminate the requirement that protective containers used to transport the filters that collect $PM_{2.5}$ samples be made of metal.

    2.) Increase the flow rate verification tolerance for $PM_{2.5}$ samplers from +/-2 percent to +/-4 percent. (This is the flow rate that would trigger a multi-point calibration of the flow rate measurement system).

- While this action eliminates the requirement that protective containers be metal, EPA still requires the use of a protective container. Flow rate verifications also are still required.

BACKGROUND

- In July 1997, EPA issued revised national ambient air quality standards for particulate matter. These revised standards set forth air quality requirements for particulate matter (PM_{10}) and fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$).

- To ensure national consistency in air quality monitoring of fine particulate, EPA established a federal reference method for the measurement of fine particulate matter, which includes very detailed performance and design requirements.

- At meetings between EPA and State and local air agencies where implementation of the national $PM_{2.5}$ monitoring network was being discussed, State and local air officials questioned whether protective containers needed to be made of metal.

- State and local air officials also expressed concern that an excessively tight flow rate verification tolerance would result in State and local field operators re-calibrating flow rate measurement systems in the field when in fact the monitors might be operating within an acceptable range.

- This proposal is being submitted because EPA has concluded that no benefits would be realized by requiring a metal container or an unnecessarily tight flow rate tolerance.

- EPA considered making changes to other monitoring specifications, such as the requirement that protective containers be used and that specific tolerances for the traceable flow rate device and the multi-point calibration of the sampler flow rate measurement system be used; however, all of these current requirements were considered important enough to remain in unchanged.

HOW WILL THIS PROPOSAL AFFECT THE MEASUREMENT OF FINE PARTICULATE ?

- This action is not expected to affect the quality of fine particulate measurements. This action will not affect fine particulate sampling or the transport of fine particulate samples.

- EPA expects that changing the flow rate verification tolerance will improve the operation of flow rate measurement systems by avoiding unnecessary calibrations.

WHAT WILL BE THE COST SAVINGS TO STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS?

- Since metal containers are not widely commercially available and other protective containers are, EPA expects today's action to lower the cost of monitoring fine particulate matter.

- By eliminating the requirement that containers be made of metal, State and local air pollution agencies can purchase the lowest cost protective containers that meet the EPA's monitoring specifications.

- EPA expects that increasing the flow rate verification tolerance will reduce the financial and administrative burden on State and local site operations by avoiding unnecessary re-calibration of the flow rate measurement systems.

FOR MORE INFORMATION...

- Interested parties can download the rule from EPA's web site on the Internet under "recent actions" at the following address: *http://www.epa.gov/ttn/oarpg/*. For further information about the rule, contact Tim Hanley at EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards at (919) 541-4417.

- EPA's Office of Air and Radiation's homepage on the Internet contains a wide range of information on the air programs, as well as many other air pollution programs and issues. The Office of Air and Radiation's home page address is: *http://www.epa.gov/oar/*.