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**Fact Sheet:
Preliminary Draft Staff Paper for Particulate Matter**

Today's Action

- ! The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is releasing two documents that are part of its regularly scheduled review of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for particulate matter (PM). The documents are the second step in the extensive scientific and technical assessment process EPA uses to review any national ambient air quality standard.
- ! The first step in that process is the preparation of an Air Quality Criteria Document, a comprehensive assessment of scientific data about the health and environmental effects associated with the pollutant under review -- in this case, PM. EPA released the Second External Review Draft of the PM Criteria Document on April 12, 2001.
- ! The documents released today include a preliminary draft Staff Paper, "Review of National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Particulate Matter," which consists of initial assessments of the most relevant information in the draft Criteria Document. The preliminary draft Staff Paper includes scientific and technical information, and proposed additional analyses and assessments about: characterizing air quality, evaluating health information, assessing health risk, and visibility data or information.
- ! The preliminary draft Staff Paper does not contain staff conclusions or recommendations about whether to revise or retain the existing PM standards. Those recommendations will be presented in the next version of the preliminary draft Staff Paper, which is expected to be released in early 2002.
- ! Also released today is a draft Risk Assessment Scoping Plan, which describes the EPA's plans and approach for analyzing the health risks associated with particulate matter. EPA will complete these analyses and summarize them in the next draft of the Staff Paper.
- ! The preliminary draft Staff Paper is available on the internet at: <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/oarpg/ramain.html>. EPA will accept public comment on the documents issued today until July 12, 2001.

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.)
- ! 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.

- ! 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 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.
- ! EPA last updated the PM standards in 1997; the decision to revise the standards was challenged in court by a number of parties. In a recent decision, the Supreme Court unanimously upheld the constitutionality of the 1970 Clean Air Act provision that authorizes EPA to set national ambient air quality standards 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.

Next Steps

- ! The Clean Air Science Advisory Committee (CASAC), a Congressionally mandated group of independent scientific and technical experts, will review the draft Criteria Document and the preliminary draft Staff Paper at a meeting in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina on July 23 - 24, 2001. This meeting is open to the public.
- ! EPA will carefully review and consider comments received during both the public comment period and the July CASAC meeting. The Agency anticipates release of a revised Criteria Document in late 2001,
- ! EPA will also revise the draft Staff Paper and anticipates release in early 2002. The next version will include recommendations on whether to revise or retain the current PM standards.