

July 17, 1998

## FACT SHEET

### **POLICY TO PROVIDE FOR EXTENDING THE DATE TO MEET GROUND-LEVEL OZONE AIR QUALITY STANDARDS FOR AREAS AFFECTED BY TRANSPORT OF POLLUTANTS FROM UPWIND AREAS**

#### **Today's Action...**

- ◆ The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is issuing a policy which would enable an area to obtain an extension of the applicable Clean Air Act “attainment date” if the area meets certain criteria. The attainment date is the Clean Air Act’s prescribed date by which the area is required to meet the air quality standard for ground-level ozone.
- ◆ Specifically, the policy provides flexibility in setting the target “attainment date” if the area’s ability to meet the ground-level ozone standard is affected by transport of pollutants from an upwind area. The policy also requires that areas adopt all necessary measures at the local level to reduce pollutants that contribute to ground-level ozone, and submit an approvable “attainment plan” to EPA which includes these local measures.
- ◆ This policy applies to all areas now subject to EPA’s 1-hour ground level ozone standard which are classified as “moderate” or “serious” (Note that area classifications are Clean Air Act designations which are based on the severity of the ground-level ozone problem). Currently, there are seven areas classified as “moderate” and fourteen areas classified as serious.
- ◆ EPA will take action on requests to extend the attainment date through subsequent rulemaking actions on an area by area basis, as appropriate. Areas that meet requirements of this policy will not be reclassified or “bumped-up” (e.g., from “moderate” to “serious”) for failing to meet Clean Air Act specified attainment dates.

#### **Background**

- ◆ The Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 outline a classification scheme for EPA to use to designate areas. This scheme is based on the extent to which the air quality within an area exceeds levels needed to meet the ozone standard (i.e., marginal, moderate, serious, severe, and extreme). The Act also sets specific deadlines for these designated areas to attain the ozone standard, with later deadlines for areas that are more polluted.
- ◆ The Act calls on areas classified as “moderate” to demonstrate attainment with the

ozone standard by November 1996 (unless EPA grants an extension) and calls on “serious” areas to demonstrate attainment by November 1999 (unless EPA grants an extension).

- ◆ A number of areas in the country that have been classified as “moderate” or “serious” are affected by pollutants that have traveled downwind from other areas. For these downwind areas, transport of pollutants from upwind areas has interfered with their ability to meet the ozone standard by the dates prescribed by the Clean Air Act. As a result, many of these areas find themselves facing the prospect of being reclassified, or “bumped up,” to a higher classification (e.g., from “moderate” to “serious”) for failing to meet the ozone standard by the specified date.
- ◆ EPA recognized that pollutant transport can impair an area’s ability to meet air quality standards. As a result, in March 1995, EPA called for a collaborative, federal-state process to assess the ozone transport problem. Through a 2-year effort known as the Ozone Transport Assessment Group (OTAG), EPA worked in partnership with the 37 easternmost States and the District of Columbia, industry representatives, and environmental groups to develop recommended strategies to address transport of ozone-forming pollutants across State boundaries.
- ◆ In October 1997, EPA acted on OTAG’s recommendations and issued a proposal requiring 22 states and the District of Columbia to submit State Implementation Plans addressing the regional transport of ozone. These State plans will decrease the transport of ozone across State boundaries in the eastern half of the United States by reducing emissions of nitrogen oxides (a precursor to ozone formation known as NO<sub>x</sub>). EPA expects to issue the final rule in September 1998.
- ◆ EPA expects the final ozone transport rule will assist many areas in attaining the ozone standard and has taken the schedule for implementation of this rule into consideration in developing this policy. In addition, EPA has also included in the policy considerations for other areas that are affected by transport from upwind areas with a later attainment date.
- ◆ On July 17, 1997, following a lengthy scientific review process, EPA revised the national ambient air quality standards for ground-level ozone. Specifically, EPA is phasing out and replacing the previous 1-hour ozone standard with a new 8-hour standard to protect against longer exposure periods. However, until the 1-hour standard is revoked for a particular area (based on no current measured violation of the 1-hour ozone standard), the area must continue to implement the requirements aimed at meeting the 1-hour standard.

### **For Further Information**

- ! Interested parties can download this policy from EPA's web site on the Internet at the following address: [www.epa.gov/airlinks](http://www.epa.gov/airlinks). For further information about the policy, contact Denise Gerth of EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards at (919) 541- 5550.
  
- ! EPA's Office of Air and Radiation's homepage on the Internet contains a wide range of information on the ozone and particulate matter standards, 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/>). The web site for general information about the new ozone and particulate matter standards is: (<http://www.epa.gov/airlinks>).