

01-19-99

FACT SHEET

AMBIENT AIR QUALITY SURVEILLANCE FOR LEAD

TODAY'S ACTION

- ! The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is today issuing a final regulation to provide States with additional flexibility in the way they monitor, or measure, levels of the air pollutant lead. This regulation will allow States to reduce the number of National Air Monitoring Stations (NAMS), or sites, that measure concentrations of lead from approximately eighty-five to approximately fifteen.
- ! EPA is reducing its requirements for measuring lead air pollutant concentrations near major highways, while retaining its focus on point sources and their impact on neighboring populations. Today's action will allow State and local agencies to discontinue lead air pollutant monitoring at many of their roadway-oriented sites (the exact number of which will vary depending on the individual choices of each State). This regulation will require States to operate only one national air monitoring station in each of the largest Metropolitan Statistical Areas within the ten EPA Regions.
- ! Additionally, this regulation will require States to operate one national air monitoring station in each populated area with any remaining lead air quality problems. (Note that in every case, these lead pollution problems are due to local point sources like lead smelters or battery plants).
- ! Today's action encourages State and local agencies to locate monitors near previously unmonitored point sources of lead pollution (i.e., any stationary source which actually emits 5 or more tons of lead per year). This regulation will not affect any monitoring currently being conducted near lead point sources

BACKGROUND

- ! In the past, automobiles were the chief contributor of emissions of lead to the atmosphere. As a result of EPA's efforts to reduce the content of lead in gasoline, the contribution of lead pollution to the air from automobiles has declined significantly since 1970. Today, a relatively small number of point sources (such as smelters and battery plants) are the primary sources of lead emissions to the atmosphere. Therefore, EPA is focusing on monitoring concentrations of lead in areas near these point sources.

- ! In the early 1990s, EPA established a National Ambient Air Quality Standard Attainment Strategy to assess air quality problems near major sources of lead pollution and to ensure that adequate monitoring be conducted nearby. At present, there are 17 monitors located near major sources of lead pollution. Through this strategy, EPA has developed guidance for monitoring around point sources that emit lead into the air. EPA encourages State and local agencies to focus their efforts on establishing networks around such sources.
- ! EPA originally issued this regulation as a direct final on November 5, 1997. Due to adverse comments received, the rule was withdrawn on December 23, 1997. EPA has addressed these comments and is issuing this regulation today in the form of a final rule.

HOW WILL THIS REGULATION AFFECT THE NATIONAL AMBIENT AIR QUALITY STANDARD FOR LEAD AND INFORMATION ABOUT THE LEAD POLLUTION PROBLEM?

- ! The information supplied by this streamlined lead monitoring network will continue to provide the necessary data to determine if counties are meeting the National Ambient Air Quality Standard for lead. Today's action targets monitoring to areas most likely to have a lead air quality problem, such as those areas near lead smelters, battery plants, or other point sources of lead pollution.
- ! Even though this regulation will allow a reduction in the number of lead monitors, it may increase information about the lead pollution problem by allowing for increased monitoring near previously unmonitored point sources of lead pollution.

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

- ! Today's rule will reduce the regulatory burden on state and local governments, and in turn reduce the cost of monitoring by up to \$1.5 million, depending upon how many sites the State and local agencies decide to retain in operation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION...

- ! Interested parties can download the rule from EPA's web site on the Internet under "recently actions" at the following address: <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/oarpg/rules.html>. For further information about the rule, contact Brenda Millar at EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards, (919) 541-4036, or Mike Jones at EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards, (919) 541-0528.
- ! EPA's Office of Air and Radiation's homepage on the Internet contains a wide range of information on the toxic air pollution program, 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 1996 National Air Quality and Emissions Trends Report

also discusses the lead pollution problem. This report is available at the following address:
<http://www.epa.gov/oar/oaqps/aqtrnd96>.