

# U.S. EPA FACT SHEET

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## San Joaquin Valley Fine Particulate Matter

September 23, 2016

### Summary of Action

- The San Joaquin Valley is classified as a Serious nonattainment area for the 1997 24-hour and annual fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) of 65 micrograms per meter cubed (µg/m<sup>3</sup>) and 15.0 µg/m<sup>3</sup>, respectively.
- Under the Clean Air Act, the San Joaquin Valley was required to attain these standards by December 31, 2015.
- The California Air Resources Board (CARB) and San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District (the District) have made significant progress in reducing emissions of PM<sub>2.5</sub> and its precursor pollutants. However, ambient PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels in the area continue to violate the 1997 PM<sub>2.5</sub> NAAQS. In June 2015, CARB submitted the District's Serious area plan for these standards (2015 PM<sub>2.5</sub> Plan, or Plan), including a request to extend the attainment deadline.
- To qualify for such extensions, the Clean Air Act requires the state to meet stringent pollution control requirements to protect public health, including a requirement to implement the most stringent measures that can feasibly be implemented in the area. In February 2016, the EPA proposed to approve most of the 2015 PM<sub>2.5</sub> Plan and to grant the requested extension.
- The EPA received adverse comments on several aspects of the Plan and its pollution control measures. Based on our reevaluation of the Plan and consideration of these comments, the EPA has concluded that CARB and the District have not adequately demonstrated that the plan for the San Joaquin Valley includes the most stringent measures that can feasibly be implemented.
- The EPA is denying CARB and the District's request to extend the San Joaquin Valley Serious area attainment deadline because it does not satisfy Clean Air Act requirements.

### Background

- The San Joaquin Valley is located in the southern half of California's central valley and includes eight counties: San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Tulare, Kings, and the San Joaquin Valley portion of Kern.
- PM<sub>2.5</sub> can be emitted directly into the atmosphere or formed in the atmosphere as a result of various chemical reactions from emissions of nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, volatile organic compounds, and ammonia. These particles can reach the deepest regions of the lungs. Exposure to particle pollution is linked to a variety of significant health problems including damage to lung tissue, cancer and premature death.

### More Information

- The State's extension request, EPA's proposed rule on the Plan, public comments, and related information can be found at: <https://www.regulations.gov/docket?D=EPA-R09-OAR-2015-0432>.
- In a separate notice, the EPA is proposing to find that the San Joaquin Valley failed to attain the 1997 PM<sub>2.5</sub> NAAQS by the December 31, 2015. If we finalize that proposal, CARB will be required to submit a revised plan that provides for expeditious attainment and a 5% annual reduction in the emissions of PM<sub>2.5</sub> or a PM<sub>2.5</sub> plan precursor pollutant.