

# **EPA TO RECONSIDER LEAD AIR QUALITY MONITORING REQUIREMENTS**

## **FACT SHEET**

### **ACTION**

- On July 22, 2009, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced it would reconsider portions of its ambient monitoring requirements for airborne lead.
- The existing lead monitoring requirements were issued in October 2008, at the same time EPA tightened the national air quality standards for lead for the first time in 30 years. The revised standards are 10 times tighter than the previous standards and will improve health protection for at-risk groups, especially children.
- The 2008 rule calls for states to place monitors near sources that emit one or more tons of lead a year. They also require a monitor to be operated in each of the 101 urban areas with populations greater than 500,000 to gather information on the general population's exposure to lead in air and to monitor compliance with the revised lead standards.
- As part of the reconsideration, EPA will consider whether additional monitoring near industrial sources of lead is warranted. The agency also will reconsider the monitoring requirements for urban areas as part of its review. EPA is not reconsidering the lead standards; implementation of those standards, including existing monitoring requirements, will move ahead on schedule.
- Children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of lead. Exposures to low levels of lead early in life have been linked to effects on IQ, learning, memory, and behavior. There is no known safe level of lead in the body.
- EPA anticipates proposing whether to revise the lead monitoring requirements later this summer. The agency anticipates issuing a final rule in spring 2010, after public review and comment.

### **BACKGROUND**

- The lead monitoring network measures concentrations of lead in the outdoor air, to assess compliance with the lead national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS).
- EPA substantially strengthened those standards in a rule issued Oct. 15, 2008, revising the level of the primary (health-based) standard from 1.5 micrograms per cubic meter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ), to 0.15  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ , measured as total suspended particles (TSP). The agency revised the secondary (welfare-based) standard to be identical to the primary standard.
- In January 2009, EPA received a petition to reconsider the lead monitoring requirements from the Missouri Coalition for the Environment Foundation, Natural Resources Defense Council, the Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning, and Physicians for Social

Responsibility. Today's action responds to that petition.

- The reconsideration will not change the timeline for meeting the revised lead standards.
  - States are required to make recommendations for areas to be designated attainment, nonattainment, or unclassifiable by October 2009. If tribes choose to submit recommendations, they must also provide them to EPA by October 2009.
  - Final designations of all attainment, nonattainment and unclassifiable areas will be effective no later than January 2012.
    - EPA intends to complete initial designations as soon as possible for areas with sufficient data from existing lead monitors. The Clean Air Act requires EPA to make these designations no later than October 2010.
    - For areas needing additional data, the agency will complete designations by October 2011, as allowed by law.
  - EPA will make designations for all areas the agency has sufficient data from the existing monitoring network to designate by October 2010 as required by the Act. Where EPA does not have sufficient data it will take the additional year offered by the statute in such circumstances and make designations for such areas in October 2011.
  - States are required to submit State Implementation Plans outlining how they will reduce pollution to meet the standards 18 months after designations take effect -- no later than June 2013.
  - States are required to meet the standards five years after designations are effective, no later than January 2017.

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

- Information about the revised lead standards is available at <http://www.epa.gov/air/lead/actions.html>