

More Areas In California Would Likely Exceed Smog Standards Under Proposal

By Amy Quinton

Capital Public Radio, Monday, February 2, 2015

Protestors called for cleaner air at a rally outside CAL-EPA's headquarters. Inside, the US-EPA held a day-long hearing on strengthening the limits on ozone pollution from the current 75 parts per billion to between 65 and 70 parts per billion.

"I spend more time inside than I do outside," says Jimmy Slover, a Sacramento resident with emphysema. "Not fair. Not Fair to me or the millions who are suffering like me," says Slover. He told EPA officials that strengthening the standard is a matter of public health.

But Ted Striechen with the American Petroleum Institute says toughening the ozone limit would harm the economy because too many parts of the country can't meet the current standard.

"Decreasing the ozone standards could put almost the entire country out of compliance," says Striechen.

The California Air Resources Board says the state has 16 regions that are not meeting the current standard. More rural, mountainous and less populated areas of California would likely exceed federal limits if the new standard is approved. States that fail to provide a clean air plan risk losing federal transportation dollars.

It could take six to ten years before final implementation.

[Fresno Bee Earth Log, Monday, Feb. 2, 2015:](#)

For EPA's big meeting on ozone, why Sacramento? Fresno is heart of nation's ozone problem

By Mark Grossi

In 2002, Bee health reporter Barbara Anderson wrote a passage about air quality that I think the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency might want to hear as it considers a tighter standard on ozone.

A gurgling cough, followed by another and another seizes the 12-year-old Fresno boy. He wraps his arms around his stomach, rocks back and forth and moans: "It feels like someone is crushing the sides of me." Coughing is a signal that Kerry's lungs are irritated and he is on the verge of an asthma attack. It's a familiar sound in the San Joaquin Valley.

And it still is a familiar sound here.

But EPA went to Sacramento, not Fresno, on Monday to hear comments about a stricter ozone standard. Why not have this meeting next door in the San Joaquin Valley? This is the place with the nation's worst ozone problem last year. And this isn't the first time the Valley led the nation in that category.

I covered one of these EPA meetings about tightening the ozone standard years ago in San Francisco. Then, as now, it struck me that the meeting was just the wrong location. EPA needs to come to Fresno.

Officials need to hear from people who live in a place that exceeded the federal standard 99 times last year — more than the South Coast air basin, the perennial smog kingpin that had 94. And that's more than Sacramento, which had 30.

Hearing about the misery among children in the Valley is worth the trip to Fresno. Dirty air health problems and early deaths are worth billions of dollars in the Valley, studies have shown.

But that's not the only reason to have an EPA hearing here.

The San Joaquin Valley is different from any other air basins in the country. At 25,000 square miles, it is the nation's largest. It is basically a giant bowl where atmospheric inversions trap dirty air for days at a time, so a little pollution goes a long way here.

The South Coast residents and industries send hundreds of tons more ozone-making gases every day than the Valley, yet the Valley often exceeds to federal standard more. South Coast has ocean breezes to help clear out the pollution. Otherwise, it might be much worse there.

Vehicle owners here pay extra pollution fees at registration time each year. Businesses have spent \$40 billion over the last 30-plus years on clean-air technology.

So the air has improved since reporter Barbara Anderson wrote that powerful story about asthma. In 2002, the Valley had 158 exceedances of the ozone standard. The total now is regularly less than 100.

But the goal is zero. The Valley is many years from that goal as it applies to the 1997 and 2008 versions of this standard.

What could EPA and the federal government do to help? It has been suggested that there is a need for more funding to replace diesel engines. There's also the idea of forming a special federal district with tax breaks to attract energy businesses and other technology producers to promote advances in clean-air technology.

But those ideas probably are not being discussed in Sacramento.