



Campaign to Strengthen EPA's Update to Soot/Particle Pollution Standards

How to Join the Campaign

We encourage residents in Southwestern Pennsylvania to participate in the upcoming public hearings over the next 60 days to call on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to set stronger fine particle/soot standards to protect the health of our region.

Date of hearings:

Tuesday, February 21 and Wednesday, February 22, 2023

Time: 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Eastern Standard Time

[Click Here to Register to Speak](#)

You do not need to register to listen in

BACKGROUND

The U.S. EPA has released a draft of updated standards for the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for fine particles (PM_{2.5}) under the Clean Air Act. The draft, an improvement over Trump-EPA levels, lowers the level for the annual average air quality standard for particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) to between 9 and 10 micrograms per cubic meter (µg/m³). The current standard is set to 12ug/m³, originally set in 2012 and continued in 2020.

The standards, however, do not go as far enough based on recommendations by most public health advocates and public health information. The World Health Organization (WHO) currently lists 5.0 ug/m³ as its standard, half of what the EPA is proposing. Advocates including the American Lung Assoc. are calling for the standard to be set at 8 ug/m³ in 2020, the last time the standards were reviewed.

Since EPA completed its last review in 2012, thousands of new scientific studies have demonstrated the dangers of soot exposure. Strengthening the primary annual PM_{2.5} standard (from 12 µg/m³) is expected to address disparities and would result in significant public health benefits.

Scientific studies affirm that people experience chronic and acute health reactions to PM_{2.5} at any exposure level. ([Cohen, Brauer et al](#)). This means that a new standard should be as health-protective as possible.

We call on the EPA to set its annual standard to 8 ug/m³, the level at which there is clear evidence suggesting health benefits for reducing PM_{2.5} emissions below this level as an annual standard.

THE ASK

We support efforts to improve the annual average standard so that it can be set to 8ug/m³ or lower to protect health from fine particle air pollution.

Our region's 2.6 million people are at risk unless both the annual and daily standards are revised. This includes vulnerable populations who bear disproportionate risks from current levels of air pollution: 55,269

children with pediatric asthma; 213,963 people with adult asthma; 160,478 people with COPD; 228,249 people with cardiovascular disease; 267,874 people living with low incomes; and 372,912 people of color. ([Swartz et al, 2002](#))

The environmental justice concerns are clear, substantial and must play a prominent role in setting updated standards.

Southwestern Pennsylvania's air quality deserves particular attention when considering revisions to the NAAQS annual standard and 24-hour standard. Weather conditions like inversions, topographic and point source conditions point to a need to improve both standards.

Allegheny County ranks in the top 1 percent of counties in the U.S. for cancer risk from point source air pollution. Our air poses a significant threat to public health with an increased risk of heart and lung disease, asthma, diabetes, cancer, and premature death. ([Breathe Project](#)).

The Clean Air Act requires the EPA to set NAAQS for pollutants that are common in outdoor air and considered harmful to public health and the environment, and that come from numerous and diverse sources.

EPA will hold a virtual public hearing on February 21 and 22, 2023, to provide the public the opportunity to present comments and information on the Agency's proposed decisions on the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for particulate matter (PM).

If the EPA receives a high volume of registrations for the public hearing, we may continue the hearing on February 23, 2023. EPA will accept written comments on the proposed decisions until March 28, 2023.

Please click the link here to the form below to speak at the public hearing. You do not need to register in order to listen. [LINK](#)

If you have questions or need technical support, please email: PM-NAAQS-Review-Hearing@rti.org

This meeting will be held through a virtual platform. There is also an option to call into the meeting.

If you would like to place a language or reasonable accommodation request: Contact EPA's public hearing team no later than February 7th at HEIDpublichearing@epa.gov or 919-541-0505.

In addition, Moms Clean Air Force (Vanessa Lynch) and Breathe's Deb Smit are available to assist anyone with questions on submitting testimony.