



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

How to Submit Written Testimony

There is still time to mail or email testimony to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to set stronger fine particle/soot standards to protect the health of our region. The in person hearing is now closed.

[Email the EPA and Send a Message to Tighten the Soot Standards](#)

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.

EPA will accept written comments on the proposed decisions until March 28, 2023.

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.

Recent scientific studies have found that no level of fine particulate pollution is safe, and our current standards don't protect people's health and safety enough. Please do all you can to tackle air pollution.

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 further 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.

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](#))

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.

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

Contact EPA's public hearing team no later than February 7th at HEIDpublichearing@epa.gov or 919-541-0505.

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