



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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# Allegheny County and Mon Valley Do Not Meet 2024 National Air Quality Standards

*Breathe Project's Response to EPA's Confusing Announcement About Meeting 1997, 2006, and 2012 Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) Decades After They Were Set*

Allegheny County, Pa. – The EPA Region 3 press statement on July 24, 2025, announcing the “Allegheny, Liberty-Clairton Areas Reach Air Quality Milestones Following EPA Approval” omits the most important fact about this region’s air quality: Allegheny County and Liberty Clairton do not meet the latest 2024 standard based on the three-year average of 2022-24.

The NAAQS standard is set at 9 ug/m<sup>3</sup> for annual average fine particle pollution (PM 2.5) based on 2022-2024 data.

Instead, the release highlights that these regions have met standards set in 1997 for annual average fine particle pollution (PM 2.5) at 15 ug/m<sup>3</sup>. This achievement is relevant only by highlighting how much later our region has met this standard compared with other places. Liberty-Clairton is one of the last to be redesignated for meeting the 1997 standard out of 39 regions that did not meet this standard set 28 years ago.

“This highlights how much of a laggard our region has been on air quality: Only 3 regions in the country now do not meet that standard,” said Matt Mehalik, executive director of the Breathe Project. “In terms of the 2006 standard for 24-hour average air quality of 35 ug/m<sup>3</sup> announced in the release: When this standard was set in 2006, there were 32 areas designated as not meeting the standard, including Liberty-Clairton. 21 have subsequently met this standard by May of 2025. Liberty-Clairton is now the 22<sup>nd</sup> out of 32 to do so. Again, this laggard performance.”

The EPA press release further announced that Allegheny County is to follow a maintenance plan to continue to demonstrate it is capable of meeting the 2012 PM 2.5 standard of 12 ug/m3.

“We need to keep our focus on what the current standards are so that we can continue to come together to reduce our region’s air quality public health risks,” said Mehalik. “This means striving to meet the 9 ug/m3 2024 fine particle standard as soon as possible and not being distracted by meeting outdated standards decades after they are announced. The public deserves clarity from our public health and regulatory agencies to avoid confusing residents into thinking that the Mon Valley has achieved current regulatory standards for annual fine particle emissions, which it has not.”

On Feb 7, 2024, the [Breathe Project heralded the EPA’s decision](#) to update NAAQS for fine particles (PM2.5) that will improve overall air quality. The new standard, based on the latest public health science, is an average exposure of 9 ug/m3 over a three-year period.

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