

May 5, 2008

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On May 1, 2008, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency proposed to strengthen the national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) for lead. The purpose of this letter is to invite you to consult on this proposal.

The proposed rule will establish new uniform national standards for lead in ambient air to protect public health. EPA proposes to revise the level of the primary (health-based) standard to within the range of 0.10 to 0.30 micrograms per cubic meter ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ), and to revise the secondary (welfare-based) standard to be identical in all respects to the primary standard. The proposed standards will significantly strengthen the standards of  $1.5 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  set in 1978.

In addition to proposing to change the level of the standard, EPA is also proposing to improve the monitoring network and outlining an approach and timeline for implementing the revisions to the lead standards. The proposed rule and accompanying materials, including maps relating to current air quality and emissions of lead from stationary sources in the U.S., are available on EPA's website at <http://www.epa.gov/air/lead>.

Though lead emissions have declined significantly in the U.S. following the permanent phaseout of leaded gasoline, there are still a variety of lead sources in the U.S. and even small amounts of lead in the air may pose a public health risk. Lead in the air can be inhaled or, after it settles out of the air, can be ingested. It causes a variety of effects at low levels of exposure including effects on the blood, central nervous system, cardiovascular system, kidneys, and immune system. Children are particularly sensitive to the effects of lead. Exposures to low levels of lead early in life are associated with effects on IQ, learning, memory, and behavior.

EPA does not believe the proposed rule will have adverse implications for Tribes because it increases the level of environmental protection nationwide. However, to ensure that your lands and interests are protected, we open the door to consultation and welcome any additional information about the standards or potential impacts you would like to share.

EPA will accept comment for 60 days after the proposed rule is published in the Federal Register. EPA will also hold public hearings on June 12, 2008, in Baltimore, Maryland, and St. Louis, Missouri. We will be available to discuss the proposed revisions in other settings as well, such as during the next National Tribal Air Association/EPA joint conference call on air quality, at the 2008 National Tribal Forum on Air Quality in June, and with Regional Tribal Operations Committees. If you prefer to initiate a formal consultation with EPA on this rule, please contact **Laura McKelvey** at **(919) 541-5497** or **Deirdre Murphy** at **(919) 541-0729**.

We want your input to assure that we develop the best rules possible. We endeavor to conduct our efforts with sensitivity to the needs and culture of Tribes and with attention to the impact of our actions on Tribal sovereignty. We look forward to receiving your input.

Sincerely,

Lydia N. Wegman  
Director  
Health and Environmental Impacts Division  
Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards