

# Info Alert

## National Conference of State Legislatures Office of State-Federal Relations

Oct. 1, 2015

### **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Announces New Ozone Standards**

On Oct. 1, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [announced](#) new federal air pollution limits on ground-level ozone, also known as “smog.” EPA has set the final standard for allowable ozone in the air at 70 parts per billion (ppb), down from the current standard of 75 ppb.

According to EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy, the new standards will improve public health, particularly for at risk groups such as people with lung diseases or asthma. The authority to implement the new standards rests with state and local air quality agencies, however, EPA sent a [memo](#) to regional offices explaining how they should work with states to ensure implementation. Areas that are found to be “out of attainment”, or having air pollution levels higher than 70 ppb, will need to work with EPA to identify ways to lower emissions.

EPA anticipates making attainment designations for areas by late 2017, based on air quality data from 2014-2016. Depending on the severity of the problem, areas will have between 2020 and 2037 to meet the new standards. Due to California's unique levels of ozone severity, EPA analyzed the state separately and has put out a [plan of action](#) on how the agency will work with the state to meet the standard. Most California counties will likely have attainment dates between 2032 and 2037.

To ensure that localities are aware when ozone levels have reached the nonattainment level, EPA will be extending the ozone monitoring season for 32 states and the District of Columbia, beginning in 2017.

Under the Clean Air Act, EPA is required to review the ozone standard every 5 years and make a decision based on the scientific evidence gathered. However, they are not required to change the standard if they do not find it necessary.

Business groups, such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, feel the new standard is unnecessary and could jeopardize jobs while environmental groups are saying the standard does not go far enough to protect public health.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the announcement, please contact NCSL staff [Ben Husch](#) (202-624-7779) or [Melanie Condon](#) (202-624-3597).