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New federal air quality standard designation gets Ohio choked up

27 Ohio counties failing to make the grade; many communities suffer from foul air

COLUMBUS, OHIO – The U.S. EPA announced its air designations for the 24-hour standard for fine particle pollution (called PM 2.5) today. Ohio has 27 counties that are in “nonattainment” or failing federal minimum air quality standards.

“These new designations are a continued alarm to Ohio officials that they must do more to protect public health. Failing to meet the standard for particle pollution means our communities are at risk and are suffering,” said David R. Celebrezze, OEC Director of Air & Water Special Projects.

If the state fails to meet the standard, consequences include expansion of the E-check program, emission off sets, and highway funds being withheld by the federal government.

Particle pollution comes from diesel engines, power plants, foundries, and other sources. The State is required to submit a State Implementation Plan that will achieve attainment for particle pollution by 2014.

“Whether on the way to work, school, home, or play, many Ohioans are exposed to diesel’s deadly brew of air toxins. Some of these toxins are known carcinogens such as benzene and formaldehyde,” said Celebrezze. “In fact, a recent study by the Harvard School of Public Health, and others concluded that truck drivers have an elevated risk of lung cancer.”

Medical researchers have linked diesel pollution to asthma attacks, heart and lung disease, cancer, and early death. Children on school buses are especially susceptible to diesel pollution because they breathe 50% more air per pound of body weight than adults.

Diesel emission reduction technology, made in America, exists today that can reduce diesel pollution by up to 90%.

The State of Ohio can take a step in meeting the standard by:

- * Adopting a no-idling policy for its vehicles
- * Fund the Diesel Emissions Reductions Grant program
- * Adopt green contract language for public works projects that require diesel emission reduction up to 90%.