

# TOP STORIES

## NATIONAL TRIBAL AIR ASSOCIATION FACT SHEET

### EPA'S PROPOSED UPDATE TO THE NATIONAL AMBIENT AIR QUALITY STANDARDS (NAAQS) FOR GROUND-LEVEL OZONE POLLUTION

#### WHAT ARE THE PROPOSED UPDATES TO THE NAAQS FOR OZONE POLLUTION?

On July 13, 2020, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed to retain, without revision the primary and secondary ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The standards, established in 2015, are currently set at 70 parts per billion (ppb), in terms of a 3-year average of the annual fourth-highest daily maximum 8-hour average ozone concentrations. EPA's proposal is based on its judgement that the current NAAQS protect the public health, including the health of at-risk populations with asthma, and protect the public welfare from adverse effects. The deadline for comment will be 45 days after it is published in the Federal Register.

The Clean Air Act requires EPA to set National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for "criteria pollutants" which are ozone, carbon monoxide, lead, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter, and sulfur dioxide. It is required by law that EPA review these standards, at least every five years, to provide protection for the health and welfare of the public. The Clean Air Act also directs EPA to set these standards to protect public health including at-risk groups with an adequate margin of safety.

The existing primary standard, was established in 2015. New information on the proposed decision concludes that the existing proposal also protects from metabolic effects. The existing secondary ozone standard is welfare-based and provides protection against adverse effects to the public welfare and from harmful ozone exposure on vegetation and the environment. Ozone circulates around the globe is also known to have effects on climate. New information on the proposed decision provides support and understanding on its effect on vegetation, ecosystems, and climate.

#### BACKGROUND: WHAT IS OZONE?

According to the EPA, ozone is a gas made up of three atoms of oxygen and it occurs in both the Earth's upper atmosphere and at ground level. Good ozone is found in the upper atmosphere known as stratospheric ozone, which provides a protective layer that shields us from harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays. Bad ozone is found in the lower atmosphere and is formed by pollutants emitted by cars, power plants, industrial boilers, refineries, chemical plants, and other sources where these react chemically with sunlight (See image). Bad ozone can trigger many health concerns in vulnerable populations like elders, children, and those who are immunocompromised. These health concerns include; lung disease, asthma, shortness of breath, cough, can damage airways, and lead to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and may make one susceptible to infection (see image below).

#### Quick Facts:

- » The existing primary and secondary standards were established in 2015 at 70 parts per billion (ppb)
- » This Proposed Rule seeks to retain the decision, without changes to both the Primary and Secondary ozone NAAQS Standards
- » NTAA recommends that EPA set the Standard to 60 ppb

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Figure 1 (right): Photo courtesy of the Maricopa County Air Quality-Asked Questions PDF

1. U.S. EPA 2019 <https://www.epa.gov/ground-level-ozone-pollution/health-effects-ozone-pollution>

On July 13, 2020, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [proposed](#) to retain, without revision the primary and secondary ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The standards, established in 2015, are currently set at 70 parts per billion (ppb), in terms of a 3-year average of the annual fourth-highest daily maximum 8-hour average ozone concentrations. EPA's proposal is based on its judgement that the current NAAQS protect the public health, including the health of at-risk populations with asthma, and protect the public welfare from adverse effects. The deadline for comment will be 45 days after it is published in the [Federal Register](#). NTAA recommends that the EPA set the standards to 60 ppb. You can download the [NTAA Fact Sheet](#) here.

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