

November 8, 2010

The Honorable Lisa Jackson
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Jackson:

As public health organizations, we urge you to adopt much stronger National Ambient Air Quality Standards for ozone. These standards must protect those who are most vulnerable from the potentially negative health impacts of ozone, including children, older adults, and those with chronic diseases. To safeguard the health of the American people, help to save lives, and reduce health care spending, we support a standard of 60 parts per billion (ppb) averaged over eight hours.

When announcing the reconsideration of the ozone standard in January, you stated "Using the best science to strengthen these standards is a long overdue action that will help millions of Americans breathe easier and live healthier." We wholeheartedly agree and urge you to finalize the standards now.

The science is clear that EPA must substantially strengthen the ozone standard to protect public health. The EPA's independent Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee reviewed the evidence from over 1,700 studies of the health impacts of ozone. They concluded unanimously that the ozone standard should be set between 60-70 parts per billion to protect human health. We recommend the standard be placed at the bottom end of that range.

Ozone or smog can cause asthma attacks, coughing and wheezing, and shortness of breath. Breathing unhealthy levels of smog sends people to the hospital and emergency rooms and creates serious health risks. Strong evidence exists that ozone smog actually can kill people.

Reducing smog levels is an important component of a larger national strategy to prevent disease and promote health. Beyond the direct health effects, efforts to encourage Americans to pursue more active, healthier lifestyles are hampered by poor air quality and the environmental health risks associated with exposure to smog. Proactive reduction of smog levels will not only reduce pollution, but would also be an crucial part of our national strategy to prevent disease and promote health in all policies, including those related to environmental health.

Millions of Americans live in areas that are already polluted with too much smog. The EPA must set the national air standard for ozone at the most protective level recommended -- 60 ppb.

We urge you to act now and set a new ozone standard to protect public health.

Sincerely,

American College of Preventive Medicine

American Lung Association

American Public Health Association

American Thoracic Society

Association of Public Health Laboratories

Boston Public Health Commission

Children's Environmental Health Network

Coalition for a Safe Environment

Hepatitis Foundation

National Association of County and City Health Officials

National Research Center for Women & Families / Cancer Prevention and Treatment Fund

Physicians for Social Responsibility

Public Health – Seattle & King County

Trust for American's Health