

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**EPA'S PROPOSED AIR QUALITY STANDARD FOR OZONE IS NOT SUFFICIENT  
TO PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH**

June 21, 2007 (Boston, MA) – The Northeast states expressed concern with today's proposal by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to revise the national ambient air quality standard for ozone air pollution.

EPA is under a court-order to review and revise as necessary the national ozone air pollution standard. The current ozone standard is 0.08 parts per million (ppm) averaged over eight hours. EPA staff previously recommended that the EPA Administrator consider revising the standard to a level within a range from somewhat below 0.080 down to 0.060 ppm. A panel of outside scientific experts advising EPA unanimously recommended that the new standard be lowered to within a range between 0.070 and 0.060 ppm, which NESCAUM supports. Today, the Administrator proposed that the ozone standard be set somewhere within a range from 0.070 to 0.075 ppm. In addition, the Administrator chose to solicit comments on not changing the current ozone standard; an unsupportable option at odds with the large body of existing health evidence.

“The science clearly shows that the current standard does not adequately protect public health from the harm caused by ozone,” stated Arthur Marin, NESCAUM's Executive Director. “EPA recognized this shortcoming, but unfortunately, it didn't go far enough with its proposed change. Because the new standards will be in place for many years to come, there could be long-term adverse public health consequences associated with this decision. Even more disturbing, EPA left the door open to no change at all.”

Ground-level ozone is a respiratory irritant, and can reduce lung function and cause asthma attacks. It may inflame and damage -- maybe permanently -- cells that line the lungs, and aggravate chronic lung and cardiac diseases. Some of the symptoms may include: coughing; shortness of breath; increased susceptibility to respiratory infection; nose and throat irritation; chest pain; and other respiratory ailments. While ozone pollution is a potent threat to those with respiratory disease, it can also affect healthy children, joggers, and others who spend time outdoors on warm, sunny, but smoggy summer days.

A number of recent studies from several separate research groups analyzing the available health research in the U.S. and Europe independently and consistently found a strong linkage between increases in ground-level ozone and risk of premature death. Recent studies also indicate that ozone may contribute to cardiac morbidity. These health consequences have not been accounted for previously, thus the costs of not reducing ozone pollution are far higher than once believed.

“Ozone pollution can affect healthy individuals as well as those with respiratory problems, and the science shows it can increase the risk of premature death,” said David Shaw Director of the New York Department of Environmental Conservation's Air Bureau and current Chair of the NESCAUM Board of

Directors. “Areas of New York State and other parts of the Northeast have among the highest childhood asthma rates in the country. Given the abundant scientific evidence available upon which to base this decision, we had hoped EPA would focus on a more protective standard.”

“EPA has been under pressure to consider costs in support of a less protective health standard, but, as the Clean Air Act and the Supreme Court have plainly stated, EPA must set health standards based on science, not costs,” stated Mr. Marin. “Costs come into play later when deciding how to meet the health standards established through the science.”

NESCAUM is the regional association of air pollution control agencies representing Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

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