



REGION 4

ATLANTA, GA 30303

April 20, 2026

James W. Boylan, Ph.D.
Chief
Air Protection Branch
Georgia Environmental Protection Division
4244 International Parkway
Suite 120
Atlanta, Georgia 30354

Re: Exceptional event requests regarding exceedances of the 2024 annual fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) at the Augusta air monitoring site (AQS ID: 13-245-0091) in the Augusta-Richmond County, GA-SC MSA for the 2024 Annual PM_{2.5} NAAQS

Dear Dr. Boylan:

This letter responds to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division's (GA EPD or "Agency") exceptional events demonstration submittals dated February 7, 2025, and September 19, 2025, requesting that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency concur with the GA EPD's request to exclude data associated with exceptional event claims for PM_{2.5} data at the Augusta site (AQS ID: 13-245-0091). These claims are influenced by smoke from Canadian Wildfires in Summer 2023 and prescribed fires in 2022, 2023 and 2024. GA EPD determined that the Canadian Wildfires and prescribed fires caused exceedances of the 2024 PM_{2.5} Annual NAAQS at the Augusta site in Richmond County, Georgia.

The Exceptional Events Rule (EER) is found in sections 50.14 and 51.930 of 40 CFR parts 50 and 51. See "Treatment of Data Influenced by Exceptional Events," 81 FR 68216 (Oct. 3, 2016). After careful consideration of the information provided, the EPA concurs, based on the weight of evidence, that the GA EPD has made the demonstrations referred to in 40 CFR 50.14(a)(2) and (b)(1). In addition, the GA EPD has met the schedule and procedural requirements in section 50.14(c) with respect to the same information. The EPA has reviewed the documentation provided by the GA EPD to demonstrate that the exceedances on twenty days in 2022 through 2024 at the Augusta monitor meet the criteria for an exceptional event in the EER. The EPA is concurring with seventeen of the twenty requested days, see Table 1b in either technical support document (TSD). The basis for our concurrence is set forth in the enclosed TSDs. There are two separate TSDs, which address the requested days impacted by Canadian

Wildfires and local prescribed fires separately. My staff has entered or shortly will enter “concurrency flags” for these data into the EPA’s Air Quality System data repository.

The EER at 40 CFR 50.14(a)(1)(i) limits the applicability of the EER to NAAQS exceedances or violations which have relevance to specific regulatory determinations by the EPA. The EPA has determined that the annual PM_{2.5} concentrations measured at the Augusta monitor on 21 days in 2021, 2 days in 2022, and 10 days in 2023 (see Table 1a and Table 1b in the TSDs), do not currently have regulatory significance because the EPA’s concurrence on the ten requested days in June-July 2023, impacted by Canadian Wildfires and seven requested days in March 2023 and February-April 2024, impacted by prescribed fires, will result in the 2024 annual PM_{2.5} Design Value being reduced to 9.0 µg/m³, thereby demonstrating attainment with the 2024 annual PM_{2.5} NAAQS. The EPA will retain GA EPD’s demonstration for future consideration should these days for which the EPA is deferring action become significant for a future regulatory action.

The EPA’s concurrence is a preliminary step in the regulatory process for actions that may rely on the dataset containing the event-influenced data and does not constitute final agency action. If the EPA takes regulatory action, including initial area designation determinations for the 2024 annual PM_{2.5} NAAQS, that is affected by exclusion of the data for the 17 event days at the Augusta site on which EPA has concurred, the EPA intends to publish notice of its proposed action in the Federal Register. The EPA’s concurrence letter and accompanying TSDs will be included in the record as part of the technical basis for that proposal. When the EPA issues that regulatory action, it will be a final agency action subject to judicial review.

If you have any questions or wish to discuss this matter further, please feel free to contact me or have your staff contact Darren Palmer, at (404) 562-9052.

Sincerely,

Denisse D. Diaz
Director
Air and Radiation Division

ENCLOSURES

1. Prescribed Fire Technical Support Document for EPA Concurrence on PM_{2.5} Exceedances Measured in Augusta (Richmond County), Georgia as Exceptional Events
2. Canadian Wildfire Technical Support Document for EPA Concurrence on PM_{2.5} Exceedances Measured in Augusta (Richmond County), Georgia as Exceptional Events

cc: DeAnna Oser,
Assistant Branch Chief, Air Protection Branch, GA EPD

Anna Aponte, Manager
Planning & Regulatory Development Unit, GA EPD