

Georgia Department of Natural Resources **Environmental Protection Division**

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For Immediate Release

October 1, 2015

Air Pollution Controls Already Implemented In Georgia Improving Air Quality

Today's announcement by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to further tighten the air pollution standard for ozone comes at a time when Georgia's air quality is already showing continuous improvement.

"It's clear that the actions Georgia has taken to ensure cleaner air for our citizens have been effective," said Governor Nathan Deal. "Business and industry have invested in pollution control technology and ozone readings have been trending generally downward over the past several years."

EPA sets National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for several pollutants including ground level ozone. In 1997, the ozone standard was set at 84 parts per billion (ppb). It was moved to a more stringent 75 ppb in 2008. "The new standard of 70 ppb will be challenging for Georgia given the controls already in place," said Jud Turner, director of the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD.)

In metro Atlanta, vehicle emissions contribute to the ozone problem and are addressed through the state's vehicle inspection and maintenance program. The goal is to improve air quality by testing and repairing polluting vehicles. Weather also plays a role in ozone formation, which is highest during the warm summer months.

Additional requirements will apply to areas of the state that cannot meet the new limit for ozone. They may include:

- Additional permitting requirements for new major facilities or major expansions.
- Additional emissions controls for existing facilities.
- Enhanced coordination between EPD and local and state transportation planners. This is already occurring in Atlanta, Gainesville, Rome, Macon and the Chattanooga areas.

Next steps include determining which areas of the state have air quality that meets the new standard. That work is scheduled for completion in October 2017. The states will then be required to prepare and submit attainment plans, which will be due in October 2020 or 2021.

With the new standard of 70 ppb, only metropolitan Atlanta will be affected. Other Georgia cities will likely continue to meet all air quality standards.

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