

EPA Response to the 2006 Petition from Friends of the Earth Regarding Lead Emissions from Piston-Engine Aircraft

Overview

- In this action EPA is responding to a petition from Friends of the Earth (FoE). In 2006, FoE petitioned the Agency, requesting that EPA find that lead emissions from general aviation aircraft may reasonably be anticipated to endanger public health and welfare and that EPA propose emissions standards under the Clean Air Act for lead from general aviation aircraft. Alternatively, FoE requested that EPA commence a study and investigation of the health and environmental impacts of lead emissions from general aviation aircraft, if EPA believes that insufficient information exists to make such a finding.
- EPA is responding to FoE's 2006 petition by describing the analytical work EPA has underway to facilitate developing a scientifically sound endangerment determination related to lead emissions from general aviation aircraft, and the timing for next steps.
- EPA intends to make its proposed and final endangerment determination following completion of this analytical work. EPA estimates that it will take up to three years, or until mid- to late 2015, to issue a final determination with regard to endangerment from lead emissions of aircraft engines. This timeframe accommodates the expected timing for delivery of necessary modeling and monitoring information and other data, development of a proposal which will be published for public comment, review and analysis of comments received, and issuing the final determination.
- In our response to FoE, we also note that we will not initiate rulemaking at this time to establish standards concerning lead emissions from piston aircraft since it would be premature at this point, given the lack of an affirmative determination regarding endangerment. If our endangerment determination

results in affirmative findings, we would pursue standard setting on a timeframe that would be determined at that point.

- After a final determination has been reached, and if EPA's evaluation of the question of endangerment results in an affirmative finding, FAA would also be required to establish standards for the composition of piston-engine aircraft fuel to control lead emissions.

Additional Information

- There are almost 20,000 airport facilities in the U.S. where leaded avgas is used.
- Currently, aviation gasoline is the only available motor fuel containing lead. Aviation gasoline is utilized in general aviation aircraft with piston engines, which are generally used for instructional flying, air taxi activities, and personal transportation. Lead is not used in jet fuel, the fuel utilized by most commercial aircraft.
- Emissions of lead from piston-engine aircraft using leaded avgas comprise approximately half of the national inventory of lead emitted to air.
- On October 15, 2008, EPA substantially strengthened the national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) for lead, finding that serious health effects occur at much lower levels of lead in blood than previously identified. EPA is currently conducting the periodic review of the NAAQS for lead.

For More Information

To download a copy of today's action and to obtain additional information regarding EPA's response to the petition from Friends of the Earth, go to:

www.epa.gov/otaq/aviation.htm

For more information about lead in air visit:

www.epa.gov/air/lead