

EPA Approves Requests from Florida and North Carolina to Relax the Summer Gasoline Volatility Standard for Florida and the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill Area and the Greensboro/Winston-Salem/High Point Area in North Carolina

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is issuing a direct final rulemaking to relax the applicable RVP standard in Florida and in the Triangle and Triad Areas in North Carolina, during the summer season (June 1st to September 15th).

Summary

The EPA is approving a request from Florida to relax the federal Reid Vapor Pressure (RVP) standard applicable to gasoline introduced into commerce in the Miami, Tampa and Jacksonville areas. The EPA is also approving a similar request from North Carolina to relax the RVP standard in the Triangle and Triad Areas. These changes apply during the summer high ozone season - June 1st to September 15th. This action amends our regulations to change the summertime RVP standard for these areas from 7.8 pounds per square inch (psi) to 9.0 psi. The EPA has determined that this change to our federal RVP regulations is consistent with the applicable provisions of the Clean Air Act. The requests from Florida and North Carolina demonstrate that all of these areas can implement the 9.0 psi RVP standard and maintain the 8-hour ozone NAAQS.

Key Elements

- This rule relaxes the volatility requirements for gasoline in three areas in Florida and two areas in North Carolina as described above, during the summer (June 1st to September 15th). It is beneficial to these areas because the action will improve the fungibility of gasoline in these areas. In other

words when this rule becomes effective the gasoline sold in these areas will be identical to the fuel sold now in the rest of Florida and in most of North Carolina. For motorists the change in summertime gasoline volatility specifications will be virtually unnoticeable.

- All of these areas have attained the health-based ozone NAAQS. This rule was dependent upon the approval of revisions of maintenance plans and a demonstration that each area would maintain the ozone NAAQS using gasoline that meets the less stringent requirement. Florida submitted the revised maintenance plans and maintenance demonstrations in August 2013 and North Carolina made its submissions in March 2013 for the Triangle Area and in April 2013 for the Triad Area. Region 4 approved Florida's submission in January 2014 (79 FR 573). The Region approved North Carolina's submissions for the Triangle and Triangle Areas in January 2014 (79 FR 47 and 79 FR 4082, respectively).

Background

In 1987, EPA determined that gasoline nationwide had become increasingly volatile, causing an increase in evaporative emissions from gasoline-powered vehicles and equipment. Evaporative emissions from gasoline, referred to as volatile organic compounds (VOCs), are precursors to the formation of tropospheric ozone and contribute to the nation's ground-level ozone problem. Ground-level ozone causes health problems, including damaged lung tissue, reduced lung function, and lung sensitization to other pollutants.

To provide for cleaner air and greater public health protection, EPA enforces maximum limits for the RVP (the most common measure of fuel volatility) of gasoline sold during the summer ozone control season - June 1st to September 15th. EPA's current regulations establish maximum RVP standards of 9.0 psi or 7.8 psi (depending on the State, the month, and the area's initial ozone attainment designation with respect to the 1-hour ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standard or "NAAQS") during the ozone control season.

In order to relax the applicable RVP standard in an area where the more stringent RVP level is required, an area must be designated as (or redesignated to) attainment and submit a maintenance plan demonstrating continued attainment of the ozone NAAQS with the less stringent RVP standard in place. All of these areas are designated as attainment areas for the 2008 ozone NAAQS as well as the earlier 1997 8-hour ozone NAAQS and the 1-hour ozone NAAQS. As described above all of these areas have demonstrated that they will continue to attain the ozone NAAQS after the summertime RVP limit has been relaxed.

Public Participation Opportunities

This rule is being released as a Direct Final Rule because we view it as a non-controversial action and anticipate no adverse comment. However, comments can be submitted under a parallel Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. For instructions on submitting written comments, please see the Federal Register notice, which is available from the Web site below or from the EPA Air and Radiation Docket (202-566-1742; please refer to Docket No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2013-0787).

For More Information

You can access the rule and related documents on EPA's Office of Transportation and Air Quality (OTAQ) Web site at:

www.epa.gov/otaq/fuels/gasolinefuels/volatility/regulations.htm.

For further information on this Direct Final Rule, please contact:

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