

EPA Proposes to Approve Request from Louisiana to Relax the Federal Summer Gasoline Volatility Standard in Several Parishes

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is issuing a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) to relax the federal Reid Vapor Pressure (RVP) standard applicable to gasoline sold in the 11 Louisiana parishes of Beauregard, Calcasieu, Jefferson, Lafayette, Lafourche, Orleans, Pointe Coupee, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, and St. Mary. This action proposes to amend EPA's regulations to relax the RVP standard from 7.8 pounds per square inch (psi) to 9.0 psi for gasoline sold during the summer ozone season.

Key Elements of the NPRM

- This rulemaking proposes to relax the volatility requirements for gasoline sold in the Louisiana parishes as described above, during the summer ozone season which runs from June 1 to September 15 of each year. Specifically, this NPRM proposes to amend the federal RVP gasoline standard for 11 Louisiana parishes from 7.8 psi to 9.0 psi provided at 40 CFR 80.27(a)(2).
- This rulemaking is in response to an April 10, 2017 request from Louisiana to relax the federal summertime gasoline volatility requirements for the 11 parishes. Louisiana has also requested that EPA relax summertime gasoline volatility requirements for the 5-parish Baton Rouge area, and EPA will address that request in a separate rulemaking at a later date.
- Relaxing the volatility requirements for gasoline sold in the 11 Louisiana parishes could be beneficial because this action could improve the fungibility of gasoline in the Area. If this proposed rulemaking becomes final and effective, the gasoline sold in the 11 parishes can be identical to the fuel sold now in most of the rest of Louisiana. For motorists, the change in summertime gasoline volatility specifications would be virtually unnoticed.

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.

The most common measure of fuel volatility is RVP. To provide for cleaner air and greater public health protection, EPA enforces maximum limits on the RVP of gasoline sold during the summer ozone season which runs from June 1 to September 15 of each year. Specifically, EPA's regulations at 40 CFR 80.27(a)(2) establish maximum RVP standards of 9.0 psi or 7.8 psi depending on the state, the month, and the area's initial ozone designation with respect to the ozone NAAQS.

In order to relax the applicable federal RVP standard in an area where the more stringent federal RVP of 7.8 psi is required, an area must be designated as (or redesignated to) attainment. If the redesignated area is still covered by a maintenance plan requirement, then it must also submit a revised maintenance plan demonstrating continued attainment of the ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) with the less stringent RVP standard in place.

The 11 parishes covered by the proposed rule were redesignated to attainment for the 1-hour ozone NAAQS and subsequently designated as attainment for the 1997 ozone NAAQS. The State was required to submit maintenance plans that applied to the period 2004 through 2014 for these parishes for the 1997 ozone NAAQS. The State submitted these plans, which were approved by EPA. The parishes were designated attainment for the 2008 ozone NAAQS and were not required to submit maintenance plans for the 2008 ozone NAAQS. Therefore, the last maintenance plans that these parishes were subject to were in place through 2014, after which they were no longer subject to a maintenance planning requirement for the ozone NAAQS. The State has not recommended any of the 11 parishes for nonattainment designation for the 2015 ozone NAAQS.

EPA has determined that because the parishes in question have met all applicable maintenance planning requirements under the Act, the proposed RVP change does not trigger a requirement for the State to provide a noninterference demonstration under CAA section 110(l), as would otherwise be required if the named parishes were still covered by a CAA section 175A or CAA section 110(a) maintenance planning requirement or were currently designated as nonattainment for any ozone NAAQS. Continued fleet turnover to newer vehicles and emission reductions from numerous national regulations are expected to continue to reduce emissions of VOCs and nitrogen oxides in the future.

For More Information

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

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

For further information on this NPRM, please contact:

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