

EPA's Approval of a Request from Louisiana to Relax the Federal Summer Gasoline Volatility Standard in the Baton Rouge Area

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is issuing a final rule to relax the federal Reid Vapor Pressure (RVP) standard applicable to gasoline sold in the five Louisiana parishes of East Baton Rouge, West Baton Rouge, Livingston, Ascension, and Iberville (the Baton Rouge Area). This final action amends EPA's regulations to relax the federal RVP standard from 7.8 pounds per square inch (psi) to 9.0 psi for gasoline sold during the summer ozone season.

EPA is acting on a request made by Louisiana to relax the RVP standard applicable to gasoline introduced into commerce during the summer fuel season, as described further below. On June 14, 2018, EPA published a notice of proposed rulemaking for today's final rule. EPA received three comments on its proposal to relax the gasoline RVP standard from 7.8 psi to 9.0 psi for the Baton Rouge Area. EPA found that these comments were either supportive of the proposed change, mischaracterized EPA's proposal (with no adverse consequence), or fell outside the scope of this action. EPA is finalizing the RVP relaxation rulemaking as proposed.

Key Elements of the Final Rule

- This final rule relaxes the volatility requirements for gasoline sold in the Baton Rouge Area during the summer ozone season, which runs from June 1 to September 15 of each year. Specifically, this final rule amends the federal RVP gasoline standard for the five parishes in the Baton Rouge Area from 7.8 psi to 9.0 psi as provided at 40 CFR 80.27(a)(2).
- Starting in 2019, gasoline introduced into commerce in the Baton Rouge Area during the summer ozone season will no longer be subject to the federal RVP requirement of 7.8 psi and must instead meet the 9.0 psi requirement.

- This final rule is in response to an April 10, 2017 request from Louisiana to relax the federal summertime gasoline volatility requirements for 16 parishes, including the five parishes covered by this final action. EPA approved Louisiana's request to relax summertime gasoline volatility requirements for the other 11 parishes in a separate rulemaking on December 26, 2017 (82 FR 60886).
- Finalizing this rule is based on a separate EPA rulemaking that approved a revised CAA section 175A maintenance plan for the Baton Rouge Area showing that the relaxation of the federal RVP gasoline requirement will not interfere with continued maintenance of the 2008 ozone national ambient air quality standard (NAAQS) or any other applicable NAAQS, including the 2015 ozone NAAQS. Louisiana submitted the section CAA 175A maintenance plan revision with a section 110(1) non-interference demonstration to EPA on January 30, 2018, and EPA finalized its approval of the State's submission on May 25, 2018 (83 FR 24226). EPA also notes that on June 4, 2018 the Baton Rouge Area was designated as an attainment/unclassifiable area for the 2015 ozone NAAQS (83 FR 25776).
- Relaxing the volatility requirements for gasoline sold in the five Louisiana parishes could be beneficial because this action will improve the fungibility of gasoline in the Baton Rouge Area by allowing the gasoline sold in the five parishes to be identical to the summertime fuel sold in the rest of Louisiana. For motorists, the change in summertime gasoline volatility performance should 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. 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.

To relax the applicable federal RVP standard in an area where the more stringent federal RVP of 7.8 psi is required, EPA believes such relaxation is best accomplished if an area is designated as (or redesignated to) attainment. If the redesignated area is still covered by a Clean Air Act (CAA) section 175A maintenance plan requirement, then it must also submit a revised maintenance plan demonstrating continued attainment of the ozone NAAQS with the less stringent RVP standard in place.

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 final rule, please contact:

David Dickinson
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Transportation and Air Quality
1200 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20460
202-343-9256
E-mail: dickinson.david@epa.gov

Or

Rudy Kapichak
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Transportation and Air Quality
2000 Traverwood Drive
Ann Arbor, MI 48105
734-214-4574
E-mail: kapichak.rudolph@epa.gov