

Proposed Revisions To Ozone Standards



EPA is accepting public comment through March 17, 2015 on a proposed revision of the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for ozone from the current limit of 75 parts per billion (ppb) to a more restrictive range of 70 to 65 ppb. EPA is also seeking comments on levels for the health standard as low as 60 ppb.

What is Ozone?

Ground-level ozone, also known as smog, is not emitted directly. It forms when nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) “cook” in sunlight. Populations vulnerable to possible negative respiratory effects include children, people who suffer from asthma and other respiratory diseases, older adults, and people who are active or work outdoors.

The Clean Air Act (CAA)

The CAA mandates a five-year review cycle of the NAAQS. As a result of the latest review, a more restrictive ozone standard is expected by October 2015. The law restricts EPA’s considerations of economic impacts in setting the standard. EPA can consider health costs, because the law was written to provide a health-based standard.

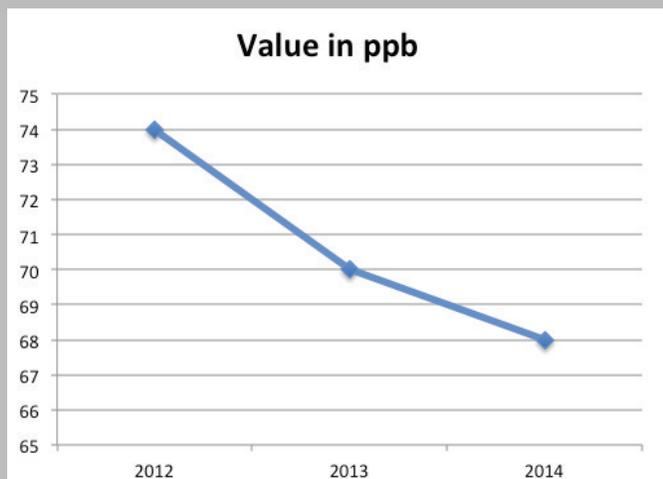
Costs and Feasibility

EPA has not issued estimates of costs for implementing a stricter ozone standard. The private National Association of Manufacturers projects nationwide costs in 2025 of \$3.9 billion at 70 ppb and \$15 billion at 65 ppb. In the proposed rule, EPA admits that some technologies are still in the development stage and that only 1/3 of the control measures are currently available in the commercial arena.

Compliance/Non-Compliance

Should EPA revise the ozone standard, it will subsequently determine which areas violate the standard or contribute to nearby violations and which do not. Areas that violate or contribute to neighboring violations of the standard have historically been designated “non-attainment.”

A designated area would need 3 years of clean data (average monitor values at or below the standard) before it could be re-designated as attainment. Three-year values for the Houma-Thibodaux area are as follows:



The current three year average of 70.67 ppb meets the existing 75 ppb standard. It would just miss a 70 ppb standard and would not meet at 65 ppb standard.

Advance Program

The Houma-Thibodaux MPO participates in EPA’s Advance Program, a collaboration of EPA, LDEQ and local governments to help attainment areas reduce emissions and continue to meet the standard. Each Advance area develops a community-based “Path Forward” plan that establishes local goals for improving air quality and the measures and programs to implement them. The MPO’s preliminary Path Forward was submitted in August 2013. This is a living document, intended to become part of a larger plan for the entire South Central Planning and Development Commission district. Participating in Advance does not guarantee the area will never go into non-attainment, but actions taken can better position the area to avoid a non-attainment designation and, if that is not possible, to handle non-attainment requirements if they should ever apply. Read more about the local plans in the Path Forward Fact Sheet.

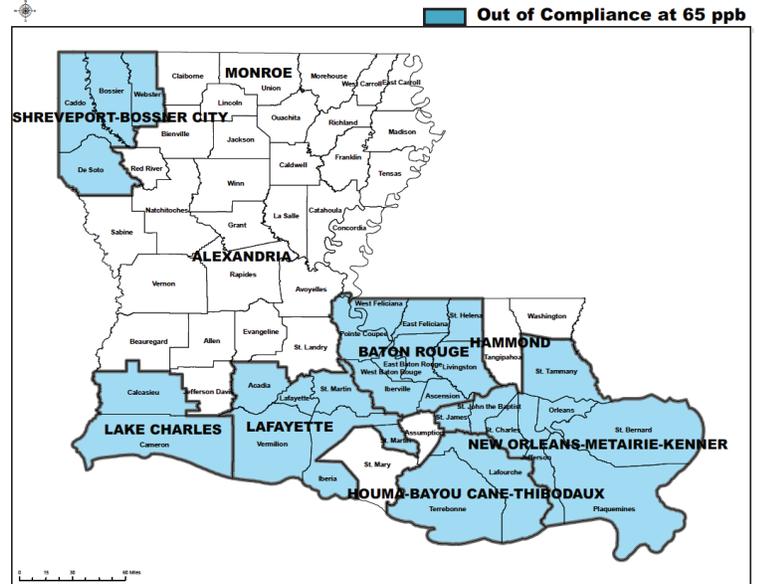
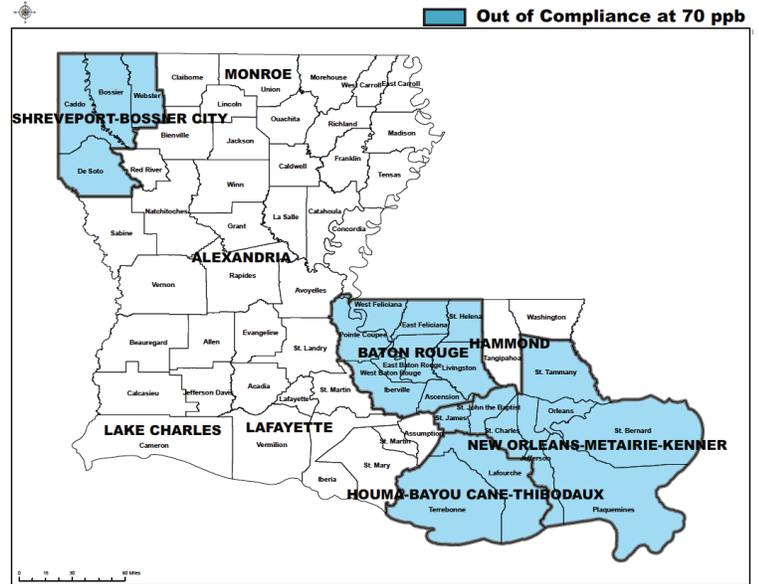
Inventory

An important first step is developing an inventory of emissions from point, area and mobile sources and existing emission reduction strategies for which the area can take credit.

Organizing

Another key step is building a coalition of government and private sector stakeholders to champion emission reduction and air quality management and to sign on to the advance program. Current Coalition members include:

- South Central Planning and Development Commission (SCPDC)
- Assumption – Lafourche – St. Charles – St. James – St. John the Baptist – Terrebonne Parishes
- Municipalities of Golden Meadow, Gramercy, Lockport, Lutcher, Napoleonville, Thibodaux
- Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Planning Organization (HTMPO)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ)
- Federal Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT)



- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
- Louisiana Chemical Association (LCA)
- Louisiana Mid-Continent Oil and Gas Association (LAMOGA)
- Port Association of Louisiana (PAL)
- South Central Industrial Association (SCIA)
- South Louisiana Economic Council (SLEC)
- Bayou Industrial Group (BIG)
- Chambers of Commerce—Assumption, Houma-Terrebonne, Lafourche and the Bayou Region, River Parishes, Thibodaux