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## EPA NAAQS STANDARDS UPDATE

**OVERVIEW:** EPA enforces National Ambient Air Quality Standards to protect public health and the environment from harmful air pollutants, with recent ozone nonattainment reclassifications affecting eight areas and triggering stricter permitting requirements for facilities emitting nitrogen oxides or volatile organic compounds above 50 tons per year.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) set National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for criteria pollutants considered harmful to public health and the environment, including carbon monoxide (CO), lead (Pb), nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>), ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), particle pollution (PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub>) and sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>). The Clean Air Act identifies two types of national ambient air quality standards. These include primary standards, which provide public health protections and protect the health of “sensitive” populations—asthmatics, children, and older people—and secondary standards, which provide public welfare protection, including protection against poor air quality (smog) and damage to animals, crops, vegetation, and buildings. The NAAQS are reviewed and revised periodically, and new standards are authorized as needed.

The standards are applied by controlling air pollution from emission sources such as vehicles, manufacturing facilities, and power plants. Each state is required to develop a state implementation plan (SIP) for how air pollution will be controlled within a subject jurisdiction for impacted criteria pollutants. The SIPs generally consist of program components—air quality monitoring, modeling, emissions inventories, and emission control strategies—and regulations the state must implement to attain and/or maintain the NAAQS. Once designations and reclassifications take effect, state and/or local governments must develop standards for attainment through air pollutant emissions reduction.

### Moderate to Severe Nonattainment

On December 17, 2024, the EPA issued a [final rule](#) to reclassify the ozone nonattainment status for eight metropolitan areas, located throughout Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Classifications for ozone nonattainment areas include “Marginal,” “Moderate,” “Serious,” “Severe,” and “Extreme,” in order of severity. The eight areas listed below are classified as moderate nonattainment and failed to meet the 2015 ozone NAAQS by the required attainment date of August 3, 2024. In response, EPA proposes to reclassify these areas as serious nonattainment areas. Each of these areas will have until July 20, 2027, to demonstrate compliance:

- Allegan County, MI
- Berrien County, MI
- Chicago, IL-IN-WI
- Cleveland, OH
- Milwaukee, WI
- Muskegon County, MI
- Sheboygan County, WI
- St. Louis, MO-IL (EPA is addressing the Missouri portion of the St. Louis area in separate actions)

### Impacts to Major and Minor Source Air Permitting

The reclassification directly impacts state air permitting programs and compliance obligations for facilities located within the listed areas. This could also potentially impact emission sources that were not previously subject to specific permitting requirements. Significant source thresholds for a facility located in a moderate nonattainment area are 100 tons per year for nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) and volatile organic compounds (VOC) (considered ozone precursors). Once reclassified as a serious nonattainment area, thresholds that trigger applicability will be reduced to 50 tons per year for NO<sub>x</sub> and VOC. Therefore, any facility within the

reclassified nonattainment areas listed above with a potential-to-emit greater than 50 tons per year of NOx or VOC will be required to obtain a Title V permit to operate. Any facilities potentially emitting more than 50 tons per year of either NOx or VOC may be subject to additional permitting requirements.

New facilities or subject sources with potential emissions greater than or equal to 50 tons per year of NOx or VOC will potentially have to complete a Nonattainment New Source Review.

Title V permit submission requirements were established once the final rule was issued on January 16, 2025. The reclassification of the listed areas are effective as of that date and will impact any permit applications that are in process with state or local agencies.

To discuss this matter and how it may impact your projects, please contact your Langan Project Manager or:



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