

## EPA Proposes Approval of Request from Tennessee to Relax the Summer Gasoline Volatility Standard for the Middle Tennessee Area

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 introduced into commerce in Davidson, Rutherford, Sumner, Williamson, and Wilson Counties in Tennessee (the “Middle Tennessee Area”). This change would apply during the summer ozone season which runs from June 1 to September 15 of each year. This action proposes to amend our regulations to relax the summer ozone season RVP gasoline standard for the Middle Tennessee Area from 7.8 pounds per square inch (psi) to 9.0 psi.

As part of the request to relax the RVP standard in the Middle Tennessee Area, the State of Tennessee requested a revision to its state implementation plan (SIP) maintenance plan that included a demonstration that the RVP relaxation would not interfere with maintenance of the applicable national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) in the Middle Tennessee Area or with any other applicable requirement of the Clean Air Act. Region 4 is conducting a concurrent rulemaking of Tennessee’s SIP revision request. EPA may finalize the RVP relaxation rulemaking after considering any comments received during the public comment period and contingent upon the finalization of the Region 4 rulemaking.

### Key Elements of the NPRM

- This rulemaking proposes to relax the volatility requirements for gasoline sold in the Middle Tennessee Area 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 the Middle Tennessee Area from 7.8 psi to 9.0 psi provided at 40 CFR 80.27(a)(2).

- 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. The area must also submit a maintenance plan demonstrating continued attainment of the ozone NAAQS with the less stringent RVP standard in place.
- Finalizing this rule is contingent upon the finalization of the EPA Region 4 concurrent rulemaking that proposes approval of Tennessee's SIP revision. The SIP revision rulemaking is evaluating whether the relaxation of the federal RVP gasoline requirement would not interfere with continued maintenance of the 1997 ozone NAAQS or any other applicable NAAQS, including the 2015 ozone NAAQS. Tennessee submitted the SIP revision with the noninterference demonstration to EPA on November 21, 2016. EPA proposed the approval of the SIP revision on February 24, 2017 (82 FR 11519).
- Relaxing the volatility requirements for gasoline sold in the Middle Tennessee Area 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 Middle Tennessee Area can be identical to the fuel sold now in most of the rest of Tennessee. For motorists, the change in summertime gasoline volatility specifications will 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 during the summer ozone season.

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. The area must also submit a maintenance plan demonstrating continued attainment of the ozone NAAQS with the less stringent RVP standard in place.

The Middle Tennessee Area has an approved 10-year maintenance plan for the 1997 ozone NAAQS and is designated as attainment for the 2008 ozone NAAQS and is currently attaining the 2015 ozone NAAQS. As described above, EPA is evaluating whether the Middle Tennessee Area will continue to attain the ozone NAAQS, and any other applicable NAAQS, if the RVP standard is relaxed from 7.8 psi to 9.0 psi during the summer ozone season.

## For More Information

You can access the rule and related documents on the EPA's Office of Transportation and Air Quality Web site at: [www.epa.gov/otaq/fuels/gasolinefuels/volatility/index.htm](http://www.epa.gov/otaq/fuels/gasolinefuels/volatility/index.htm)

For further information on this NPRM, please contact:

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