



For Immediate Release
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ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN: REDUCE OZONE STANDARD TO BETTER PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH

Attorney General's Office Testifies at USEPA Hearing on Ozone Standards

Chicago - Attorney General Lisa Madigan today submitted testimony calling on the federal government to heed the advice of its own scientists and substantially reduce the current standard for ozone levels to better protect the health of those most vulnerable to smog.

Madigan's testimony was presented during a public hearing in Chicago conducted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on the Agency's proposed rule revising the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for ozone.

Commonly known as smog, ozone forms when hydrocarbon vapors and nitrogen oxides react in the presence of sunlight and heat. Sources of hydrocarbons include motor vehicles, small engines, chemical plants, factories, refineries and gasoline stations. Nitrogen oxides are released by power plants, industrial boilers, vehicles and locomotives.

The EPA is proposing to revise the level of the eight-hour standard for ozone to a level within the range of 0.070 to 0.075 parts per million (ppm). Alternately, the agency is seeking comment on setting ozone levels as low as 0.060 ppm or maintaining the current standard of 0.084 ppm, the current standard in effect since 1997.

Through comments presented at the public hearing by staff, Madigan said that ozone is a powerful respiratory irritant, especially during the summer months.

“Healthy adults, even at the current level for ozone, can suffer decreased lung function, increased respiratory symptoms and susceptibility to respiratory infection. The impact is far worse on young children, senior citizens, individuals who work out of doors and those people who already suffer from lung disease such as asthma,” Madigan said.

Madigan noted that EPA's own Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC) maintains there is no justification for retaining the current ozone standard. The CASAC was created by Congress to advise EPA in establishing ambient standards under the Clean Air Act. The Committee in fact unanimously recommended reducing the ozone standard to a range of 0.060 to 0.070 ppm that will protect public health “with an adequate margin of safety.”

“If the Clean Air Act provision establishing CASAC is to have any meaning at all, then EPA must carefully consider its recommendations,” Madigan implored.

Today's hearing is one of five public comment periods for the proposed ozone rule. Madigan is on record in opposition to an earlier EPA revision of the NAAQS for particulate matter (soot). Madigan's office is challenging that ruling under a Petition for Review in the federal appeals court.

Senior Assistant Attorney General Gerald Karr of Madigan's Environmental Bureau presented the testimony at today's hearing.

In addition to today's testimony, Attorney General Madigan has taken the lead in fighting for clean air through efforts to ensure that the federal government does not weaken tough clean air standards required of older facilities when their owners upgrade their equipment. Madigan's intervention in the 2005 Illinois Power case involving a coal-fired power plant in southwestern Illinois resulted in one of the largest clean air settlements in state history. Just over a week ago, Madigan joined Chicago-area and state officials and environmental activists in filing a petition in Indiana to block increased air pollution due to planned expansion of the BP North America's Whiting Refinery in northwest Indiana.

-30-

[Return to September 2007 Press Releases](#)