



State of Louisiana

Department of Environmental Quality



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EPA gives DEQ thumbs up for stringent air quality standard

The United States Environmental Protection Agency formally announced today that Louisiana is in attainment for the air quality standard of fine particulate matter, also known as PM 2.5. After reviewing three years of monitoring data provided by the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, EPA concluded that the state met the standard. EPA made a nationwide announcement of the PM 2.5 status of each state.

PM 2.5 consists of tiny particles that pose a greater health risk than larger particles because they can lodge deep inside the lungs. Studies have shown that exposure to PM 2.5, which is generally one-30th the width of the average human hair, can cause cardiovascular disease, lung disease and asthma attacks.

“Once again, the federal government has recognized Louisiana for an important environmental accomplishment,” said Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco. “Air quality standards that are protective of human health are important to ensuring a healthy quality of life. It’s reassuring to know that Louisiana meets the strict EPA standard statewide.”

The fine particles that make up PM 2.5 are from solid and liquid particles suspended in the air. The particles can be directly emitted from a source or formed in the atmosphere as part of a chemical reaction. PM 2.5 is mainly caused by pollutants emitted when fuel is combusted. Power plants that use fossil fuel and automobiles are examples of PM 2.5 sources.

“Every Louisiana parish is in attainment for all federal national ambient air quality standards except for the five Baton Rouge-area parishes that remain out of attainment for the ozone standard,” said DEQ Secretary Mike McDaniel. “We are now very close to achieving attainment for ozone in the Baton Rouge area. Our goal is to achieve and maintain compliance with all national air ambient air quality standards by 2007 for the entire state.”

In 1999, according to EPA, DEQ became the first state in Region 6 to monitor for PM 2.5. EPA’s Region 6 consists of Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico and Oklahoma. Currently, DEQ has 25 PM 2.5 monitors throughout the state.