

Concept

Revision to Ambient Lead Standard (488)

Reason for Action

To update the ambient air quality standard for Lead in Rule 15 NCAC 02D .0408.

Scope/Nature/Summary

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) strengthened its National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for lead on October 15, 2008. The USEPA revised the lead standard, a health-based standard, to a level of 0.15 micrograms per cubic meter $\left(\frac{\mu\text{g}}{\text{m}^3}\right)$. The USEPA also revised the secondary standard, a welfare-based standard, to be identical to the primary standard. The initial standard, established in 1978, was $1.5 \frac{\mu\text{g}}{\text{m}^3}$. The revised standard is ten times more stringent than the previous standard and will improve health protection for at-risk groups, especially children. North Carolina does not currently have any areas violating the revised lead standard.

The USEPA also revised the averaging time that is used to determine compliance with the lead standard. The calculation method used to determine the averaging time is based on a “rolling” three month period with a maximum (not-to-exceed) form, evaluated over a three year period. A “rolling” three month average considers each of the 12 three month periods associated with a given year and not just the four calendar quarters within that year. Additionally, the USEPA is improving the lead ambient monitoring network. As a result, ambient monitors are required in urban areas with a population greater than 500,000. Based on this criterion, ambient monitors are required to be operational by January 2011 in Charlotte, Greensboro and Raleigh. Ambient monitors are also required near industrial facilities that emit 1 ton or more of lead per year. There are currently no industrial facilities in North Carolina that meet this criterion.

Amendments to 15 NCAC 02D .0408 are necessary to reflect the federal revisions to the lead NAAQS.

The rule amendments are recommended by DAQ staff.

Statutory Authority

G.S. 143-215.3(a)(1); 143-215.107(a)(3)