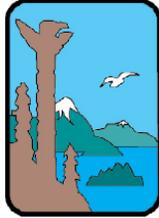


ALASKA
Department of
Environmental
Conservation



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Oct. 9, 2009

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Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation and the Fairbanks North Star Borough reaffirm their commitment to reduce fine particulate pollution

Public health concerns to spur changes

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently designated a section of the Fairbanks North Star Borough as out of attainment for fine particle pollution. The designation will require new steps to reduce pollution from fine particles, also known as PM 2.5.

"Finding ways to reduce fine particulate pollution in Fairbanks to protect public health is an important priority for the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Scientific findings have linked breathing fine particles to increased health problems particularly for young children and the elderly," said Alice Edwards, DEC's acting director of Air Quality.

On October 6th Fairbanks residents voted "Yes" to an advisory measure for the Borough to operate a PM2.5 reduction program. Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB) Mayor Jim Whitaker said "the advisory vote confirms that residents of the FNSB are committed to cleaning up the air, and that local control is the preferred method for dealing with this important health risk."

Sources of fine particulate matter include different forms of fuel-burning equipment such as industrial plants, transportation sources and space heating. Exposure to this polluted air can result in increased hospital admissions and doctor and emergency department visits for respiratory and cardiovascular disease, to heart attacks and premature death.

In 2006, the EPA strengthened its air quality standards nationwide for fine particulates. This past winter, air tested in the borough failed to meet the new standard on more than twenty days. DEC and the FNSB received more than 100 complaints from residents on bad air days. Callers included school nurses and parents who worried about children suffering more asthma attacks and breathing difficulties.

Protecting the air is a goal of the federal Clean Air Act. The act requires the state or local governments to develop a plan to improve air quality in problem areas. They are required to consider all sources of fine particulate matter and determine the most effective ways to limit pollution from those sources to protect health.

Residents can take proactive measures to improve air quality by adequately seasoning wood, using EPA-certified woods stoves and other smart burning practices. More information on Fairbanks air quality and ways to improve it at http://www.dec.state.ak.us/air/anpms/pm/pm2-5_fbks.htm.