



DEC News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Anchorage Air Quality Continues to Improve, DEC Suspends Ethanol Program

Projections show health standards will continue to be met, air quality maintained

Anchorage-July 30, 2003—The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is suspending Anchorage's ethanol fuels program. For the last six years, Anchorage has measured full compliance with the health standard for carbon monoxide (CO) and projections show continued attainment without ethanol.

“Our interest is first and foremost that good air quality in Anchorage is maintained. Since 1997, Anchorage has met the federal air quality carbon monoxide standard. Recent emission projections indicate health standards for CO will continue to be met without ethanol,” said DEC Commissioner Ernesta Ballard.

According to Tom Chapple, DEC's director of Air & Water Quality, DEC has been considering removing ethanol requirements since last winter. “Ethanol blended fuel is becoming less effective in reducing tailpipe emissions and other methods appear more cost effective,” Chapple said. Eliminating the requirement will save the State \$2.5 million in fuel tax credits used to subsidize part of the program's costs.

Chapple said that DEC is preparing an air quality maintenance plan with Anchorage that will serve the community for the next decade and beyond. The long-term air quality plan will protect Anchorage from violations of the CO standard without the use of ethanol fuels as a primary control. The ethanol program is included as a contingency measure should violations of the health standard occur. The plan is currently under development and will be open for public comments later this summer and fall. The goal is to submit the plan to EPA by next Spring.

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Background:

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- The National Ambient Air Quality Standard for Carbon Monoxide (CO) is 9 parts per million (ppm) for an 8-hour average.
- The health standard allows for one 8-hour excursion above the level of the standard during a year at each monitoring site. The second 8-hour concentration in excess of the standard at a monitor is a violation.
- The level of the health standard is exceeded when a monitoring site records an 8 hour average concentration of 9.5 ppm or higher (due to rounding, 9.4 ppm rounds to 9 ppm).
- Anchorage currently operates three CO monitoring sites during the winter months.
- Two sites are located in residential neighborhoods. One site is located near the New Seward Highway.
- Anchorage has not violated the CO health standard since 1996.