

DEP NEWS

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection

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EPA CONFIRMS MASSACHUSETTS COMPLIANCE WITH FEDERAL CARBON MONOXIDE STANDARDS

BOSTON – Massachusetts and New England have achieved a significant milestone in the ongoing effort to protect air quality - total compliance with federal National Ambient Air Quality Standards for carbon monoxide.

Robert Varney, regional administrator for the federal Environmental Protection Agency in New England, recently certified the cities of Lowell, Springfield, Waltham and Worcester as complying with the federal standards for carbon monoxide (CO).

With these cities in compliance, every community in Massachusetts and New England now meets the CO standard. The new designations come after more than 10 years of monitoring, during which no CO violations were reported in the four cities.

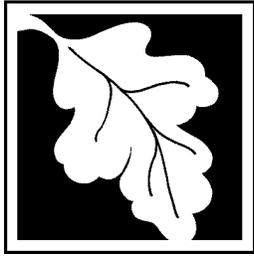
"Eliminating air quality problems associated with carbon monoxide pollution is another victory in our fight to provide clean air for all New Englanders," Varney said. "Our goal is to preserve and improve air quality throughout New England, and address the air pollutants that continue to pose unhealthy risks to our children and sensitive individuals."

Carbon monoxide gas enters the bloodstream through the lungs and reduces the amount of oxygen reaching the body's organs and tissues. People with cardiovascular disease, such as angina, are most at risk from this pollutant. The effects of CO on healthy adults include impaired exercise capacity, visual perception, manual dexterity, learning functions, and the ability to perform complex tasks.

Since the mid-1970s, programs implemented in Massachusetts, through the state Department of Environmental Protection and the EPA, have reduced CO emissions and ambient concentrations of CO throughout the state. With more than half of all CO emissions coming from motor vehicles, curbing vehicle emissions has been key to achieving compliance and protecting air quality.

Massachusetts' success has resulted from a number of ongoing efforts dating from the early 1980s. In 1983, DEP began the Basic Inspection and Maintenance Program for on-road vehicles,

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which provided the state with the means to monitor every vehicle for emissions. Since 1999, about 97,000 vehicles identified as “gross polluters” have been repaired under the program.

In 1995, DEP introduced the California Low Emission Vehicle Program in Massachusetts, which requires all new vehicles sold in the state to meet California emission standards—the toughest in the nation. Also, DEP has worked closely with municipalities and state transportation agencies to tackle tough traffic flow problems in heavily congested areas around the state, which has proved vital to achieving this air-quality goal.

In addition, since 1995, Massachusetts has voluntarily adopted federal requirements for reformulated gasoline to provide cleaner burning fuel and further reduce the emission of CO and other toxic compounds.

"The Swift Administration is working on many fronts to make sure Massachusetts residents have clean air to breathe by reducing emissions from in-state and out-of-state sources of all kinds, including vehicles and power plants," said Bob Durand, Secretary of Environmental Affairs. "Compliance with the carbon monoxide limits is one more way we can help all of our residents breathe easier."

Lauren Liss, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, said Massachusetts has been a leader in air quality protection efforts for many years.

“Our compliance with carbon monoxide standards across the state is just the latest result of these efforts,” Liss said “We are committed to continuing our aggressive and innovative efforts to ensure Massachusetts residents have clean air to breathe.”

Liss also cited additional state efforts that will help to further reduce CO emissions and safeguard air quality in Massachusetts. These include the second phase of the California Low Emission Vehicle Program, which calls for even stricter emission standards, and the Massachusetts Enhanced Emissions and Safety Program, which provides for more accurate vehicle emissions testing.

Carbon monoxide is one of six air pollutants regulated by the EPA through National Ambient Air Quality Standards. The others are lead, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, particulates, and ozone. Massachusetts now meets the standards for all of these pollutants except ozone.

The Department of Environmental Protection is responsible for ensuring clean air and water, safe management of solid and hazardous wastes, timely cleanup of hazardous waste sites and spills, and the preservation of wetlands and coastal resources.

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