

News Release

KEY SMOG-CAUSING POLLUTANT DECLARED TOXIC UNDER FEDERAL LAW

Ottawa, May 27, 2000 – Environment Minister David Anderson and Health Minister Allan Rock announced today that Official notification has been published in the Canada Gazette that Respirable Particulate Matter less than or equal to 10 Microns ($PM_{\leq 10}$), a key component of smog, is toxic under the new *Canadian Environmental Protection Act* (CEPA 1999).

“The declaration of $PM_{\leq 10}$ as CEPA toxic is one part of an overall Government of Canada approach to clean air,” said Environment Minister David Anderson. “Our goal on Particulate Matter is to see specific emission reduction targets for key industrial sectors, with timetables to meet those targets.”

The Gazette notification indicates that the Ministers will recommend to the Governor in Council that $PM_{\leq 10}$ be added to the List of Toxic Substances in Schedule 1 of CEPA. The government has two years to develop control measures to reduce exposure to $PM_{\leq 10}$, and a further 18 months to implement them.

“As we move forward on developing control measures,” said Minister Anderson, “we will pay particular attention to the smallest of these particles. They represent the biggest threat to human health. In fact, I will be meeting with my provincial and territorial counterparts next week to discuss a proposed Canada-Wide Standard for these small particles to reduce threat to air we breath.”

$PM_{\leq 10}$ is produced through a variety of human activities and natural sources including the burning of fossil fuels, forest fires and many industrial sources that involve grinding such as mining, construction and demolition.

“Today’s announcement signals our commitment to maintain and improve the health of Canadians,” said Minister Rock. “Through CEPA, the Government of Canada is taking significant action to provide better air quality to Canadians.”

Because of its small size, PM_{≤10} can penetrate deep into human lungs, where it becomes trapped. It has been linked with chronic respiratory disease and a range of other health ailments including cardiovascular disease. Scientists now believe that there is no safe level of exposure to PM_{≤10}, and even relatively low levels can lead to premature deaths from cardiovascular causes. Children, the elderly and people with respiratory diseases are particularly vulnerable. Outdoor PM_{≤10} concentrations also cause increased number of workdays lost for adult workers and increased school absences for children.

Action on PM_{≤10} is among a number of immediate and long term actions on clean air recently announced by Minister Anderson. The national program includes the recent launch of a process in Toronto on May 25th and 26th to reduce pollution from vehicles and the fuels that power them, as well as an additional \$1.2 million to the National Air Pollution Surveillance Network to upgrade air pollution monitoring across Canada.

Minister Anderson has also reaffirmed his commitment to signing an Ozone Annex under the Canada-United States Air Quality Agreement before the end of the year.

The Canada Gazette notice and Annex can be found at http://canada.gc.ca/gazette/hompar1_e.html

The Priority Substances List Assessment Report on Respirable PM_{≤10} will be available to the public as of May 29, 2000 at http://www.ec.gc.ca/cceb1/eng/final/index_e.html or from the Inquiry Centre of Environment Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0H3 (1-800-668-6767).

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