




MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 21, 2024

TO: Community Advisory Council (CAC) Members

FROM: Aeron Arlin Genet, Air Pollution Control Officer 

SUBJECT: Community Advisory Council - Quarterly Update

The last meeting of the Community Advisory Council (CAC) occurred on February 15, 2024. Per the CAC By-Laws, District staff will provide a quarterly update to the CAC to maintain continuity during periods when there are no planning or rulemaking matters to discuss. The items below are provided as a quarterly status update, and a listing of the previous status updates can be found [here](#) on our website.

Amendments to District Rule 210, Fees

On May 16, 2024, the District Board of Directors unanimously approved the revisions to District Rule 210, Fees. The revised rule reflects a concerted effort by District staff, industry, and CAC members to achieve a workable rule that meets the District's cost-recovery goals over the next 10-year period. The revisions to Rule 210 will be effective on July 1, 2024, and staff have been actively preparing for all programmatic database changes and website updates. Staff have also been conducting outreach to affected sources regarding implementation of the proposed changes, such as including the announcement in the District's May newsletter, mailing an informational postcard to permitted sources along with their invoices, and prominently featuring the upcoming changes on the website. General fee information will continue to be housed at www.ourair.org/district-fees/, and a historical record of the public meetings surrounding the Rule 210 amendments can be found at www.ourair.org/rule-history/.

EPA revisions to the PM_{2.5} Ambient Air Quality Standard and Air Quality Index (AQI)

Particulate Matter consists of fine minerals, metal, soot, smoke, and dust particles suspended in the air that can harm our lungs. For health reasons, we are concerned with inhalable particulate matter less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM_{2.5}) since these small particles can permanently lodge in the deepest areas of the lungs, causing respiratory issues and other illnesses. To help protect the public from PM_{2.5} and all other criteria air pollutants, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) develops and implements the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The NAAQS determine how much of each pollutant can be in the air without causing harm, and they are set at levels to protect public health, including the health of sensitive or at-risk groups.

The PM_{2.5} NAAQS consists of two separate standards. It includes a 24-hour standard that addresses the short-term, acute health effects, and an annual standard that addresses the long-term, chronic health effects of breathing fine particulate matter. EPA is required to periodically review and assess the adequacy of these standards based on recent scientific evidence and studies. Table 1 below demonstrates how the PM_{2.5} NAAQS has been revised over the last 3 decades.

Table 1: PM_{2.5} NAAQS History

Year	PM _{2.5} 24-hour standard	PM _{2.5} Annual standard
1997	65 µg/m ³	15.0 µg/m ³
2006	35 µg/m ³	15.0 µg/m ³
2012	35 µg/m ³	12.0 µg/m ³
2024	35 µg/m ³	9.0 µg/m ³

As shown in the table above, the EPA recently lowered the PM_{2.5} annual standard from 12.0 to 9.0 micrograms per cubic meter (µg/m³), while retaining the 24-hour standard at 35 µg/m³. EPA expects that more than 99% of the counties within the United States will meet the revised PM_{2.5} standard, and based on the District’s preliminary design value of 7.5 µg/m³ calculated from the 2021-2023 air monitoring data, Santa Barbara County is one of the counties that is expected to be in attainment. The attainment designations are anticipated to be finalized by the EPA in February 2026 using the monitoring data from calendar years 2022-2024.

Due to the changes to the PM_{2.5} standard, EPA also revised the pollutant breakpoints in the Air Quality Index (AQI). The AQI is a useful tool to quickly visualize how clean the air is and if any precautions should be taken before going outside. Table 2 below shows how the measured PM_{2.5} concentrations relate to the AQI values, and it describes why the breakpoints have been changed.

Table 2: Air Quality Index (AQI) Breakpoints for PM_{2.5}

AQI Category & Index Value	Previous AQI Breakpoints (2012 PM _{2.5} Standards)	Revised AQI Breakpoints (2024 PM _{2.5} Standards)	What Changed?
Good (0 – 50)	0 – 12.0 µg/m ³	0 – 9.0 µg/m ³	EPA updated the breakpoint between Good and Moderate to reflect the updated annual standard of 9 µg/m ³ .
Moderate (51 – 100)	12.1 - 35.4 µg/m ³	9.1 - 35.4 µg/m ³	
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups (101 – 150)	35.5 - 55.4 µg/m ³	35.5 - 55.4 µg/m ³	No change.
Unhealthy (151 – 200)	55.5 - 150.4 µg/m ³	55.5 - 125.4 µg/m ³	EPA updated the breakpoints based on scientific evidence about particle pollution and health.
Very Unhealthy (201 – 300)	150.5 - 250.4 µg/m ³	125.5 - 225.4 µg/m ³	
Hazardous (301+)	250.4 - 500 µg/m ³	225.4 µg/m ³ or more	

The revised AQI breakpoints became effective in May 2024, and Santa Barbara County can expect to see more days in the Moderate (Yellow) category. It's important to note that having more Moderate days does not mean that air quality is getting worse. Rather, it means that EPA has learned more about the health impacts of breathing air containing particle pollution, and the health guidance has been adjusted accordingly. Staff does not expect the changes to the Unhealthy, Very Unhealthy, and Hazardous breakpoints to be impactful as these levels are typically only reached during wildfire events. APCD staff already issues advisories and notifications to the public whenever wildfires are anticipated to cause unhealthy levels of air pollution.

To view both the current and forecasted AQI values for the District's monitoring stations, please visit www.ourair.org/todays-air-quality/. For more information on the revised PM_{2.5} standard, please visit www.epa.gov/particle-pollution-designations.

This concludes the status update for this quarter. If you have any questions, please contact me (aag@sbcapcd.org) or Alex Economou (aje@sbcapcd.org).

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The CAC's charter is to consider issues related to air pollution planning and rulemaking for which the District has jurisdiction, and to render advice to the District Board and the APCO. The CAC serves an important function by providing expertise and representation of community interests during planning and rulemaking. The CAC's advice has helped the District Board adopt plans and rules, which have contributed to improving air quality in our county, and District staff appreciate the care and consideration you show in carrying out your service. These updates are also be posted to our website at www.ourair.org/community-advisory-council-info.