

**METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**

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December 15, 2004CONTACT: Steven Kania
202-962-3249**METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON'S AIR QUALITY SHOWS IMPROVEMENT**

Air quality in the National Capital Region shows improvement, based on a study completed by the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee. According to the study, the region is expected to comply with the EPA's one-hour ozone standard by 2005.

Over the past 10 years, the number of days that ozone levels exceeded EPA air quality standards declined—even on hot, dry summer days when ozone most often forms. In addition, air quality monitors throughout the region have measured lower concentrations of ozone and more monitors are in compliance with EPA's one-hour standard.

The region has made great strides reducing the emissions that cause ozone. For example, nitrogen oxides—found in vehicle exhaust and power plant emissions—have decreased by approximately 30 percent between 1990 and 2002. During this time, volatile organic compounds—such as fumes from chemical solvents, paints and gas cans—were reduced by more than 60 percent. Further reductions are anticipated in 2005.

While local emission reductions have reduced ozone pollution, the region's air quality continues to be significantly affected by ozone and emissions transported from areas outside of the Metropolitan Washington Area. States upwind of the region began to increase control of their nitrogen oxide emissions as a result of an EPA initiative. Together with local emission controls, emission reductions from upwind states should contribute to metropolitan Washington meeting the one-hour ozone standard in 2005.

The Washington region, originally designated as a serious nonattainment area for failing to meet the one-hour ozone health standard, was reclassified as "severe" nonattainment for failing to meet the 1999 attainment deadline. Although the region's 1-hour ozone deadline is 2005, EPA's new 8-hour ozone standard, requires the Washington region to meet tougher requirements by 2010.

For more information on COG's air program, please visit <http://www.mwcog.org/environment/air/>