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Several Iowa Townships Declared Above Air Pollution Standard for Fine Particles

Posted: *December 22, 2008*

Urbandale – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) learned today that portions of Scott and Muscatine counties were declared in non attainment for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) daily standards for fine particle pollution, also known as fine particulate matter, or PM2.5 [microns in diameter]. The non attainment status will not go into effect until early April 2009.

To protect public health, the EPA strengthened the 24-hour fine particle pollution standard in 2006 from 65 micrograms per cubic meter of air to 35. Monitoring data from the years 2005 – 2007 were used to make the EPA designation.

"We will use several strategies to bring these areas back within the EPA standard," said Jim McGraw, DNR air quality program development supervisor. "We are working with industries in these areas to reduce emissions. Additionally, we are looking at ways to reduce Iowa's background level of particle pollution across the state."

Fine particles can either be emitted directly, or they can form in the atmosphere from reactions with other pollutants. Exposure to fine particle pollution can cause serious health problems, including respiratory and cardiovascular difficulties, as well as premature death. Major contributors to fine particle air pollution other than industry include vehicle exhaust and wood and trash burning.

"At this point in the year, our air monitors in the Muscatine and Davenport areas have recorded fewer occurrences of fine particle pollution rising above the standard," added McGraw. "Unless something unexpected happens, we believe the 2006 – 2008 data will show these areas back in attainment."

The Scott County nonattainment area includes the townships of Buffalo, Davenport, Pleasant Valley and Sheridan, and the area within the city limits of Davenport in the townships of Hickory Grove, Davenport and Blue Grass (including all of the city of Blue Grass). Muscatine County's nonattainment area includes the townships of Bloomington, Fruitland, Montpelier and Sweetland.

Townships in Rock Island, Ill., are also included in EPA's designations for the Quad City area. In Illinois, the Rock Island County nonattainment area includes the townships of Black Hawk, Coal Valley, Hampton, Moline, Rock Island, South Moline and South Rock Island.

Current air monitoring data is available on the Iowa DNR web site at <http://www.iowadnr.gov/air/current/current.html>. For more information about fine particle pollution, go to <http://www.iowadnr.gov/air/prof/progdev/pm25na.html>.

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