

January 11, 2012

BY EMAIL AND US MAIL TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Lisa Jackson
Administrator
USEPA Headquarters
Ariel Rios Building
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Washington, DC 20460
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Dear Administrator Jackson:

We are writing to strongly urge you to take an important step to reduce pollution from the nation's cars, light trucks, and sport-utility vehicles. In particular, we respectfully ask you to immediately propose Tier 3 emissions and gasoline standards for passenger vehicles and to finalize these protections by the summer of 2012. A rigorous Tier 3 program would have immediate and far-reaching health and environmental benefits: reducing a cascade of harmful airborne contaminants, ensuring longer and healthier lives, and helping states and communities across our country restore healthy air. These vital health protections will be achieved at an extremely modest cost – the additional cost to consumers of the cleaner gasoline would be less than a penny a gallon. And timely finalization of Tier 3 standards would allow manufacturers to efficiently align technology upgrades with pending fuel efficiency and greenhouse gas emissions standards. Now is the time to secure these human health protections for our nation.

Millions of Americans breathe cleaner, healthier air as a result of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's leadership in carrying out our nation's clean air laws. But serious challenges remain. More than 1 in 3 Americans still live in areas where air pollutant levels exceed at least one of the health-based National Ambient Air Quality Standards. And passenger vehicles remain the second largest emitters of oxides of nitrogen and volatile organic compounds in the U.S. – the primary pollutants that form ozone. These vehicles also emit more than half of all carbon monoxide pollution and contribute significantly to lethal particulate matter emissions.

A protective Tier 3 program has the potential to cut gasoline vehicle emissions of nitrogen oxides by nearly sixty percent, carbon monoxide by about 38 percent, and volatile organic compounds by close to a third when these protections are carried out. The substantial emissions reductions from all vehicles will translate into more than 400 avoided premature deaths and 52,000 avoided lost workdays each year.¹

¹ NACAA, *Cleaner Cars, Cleaner Fuel, Cleaner Air: The Need for and Benefits of Tier 3 Vehicle and Fuel Regulations*; October, 2011.

Reducing sulfur in gasoline will also result in an immediate reduction in emissions from the existing fleet – on the order of approximately 260,000 tons of nitrogen oxides in 2017 when the program begins – equivalent to taking 33 million cars off our nation’s roads.

A timely federal Tier 3 program is also imperative for states to meet the health-based National Ambient Air Quality Standards, including the ozone standard adopted in 2008, which assumed final Tier 3 emissions and gasoline standards in its baseline. Emissions reductions not achieved through a rigorous Tier 3 program would have to come from controls on local sources, which could be far less significant in magnitude and less cost-effective.

A timely Tier 3 program is critical to protect human health from transportation sector pollution and one of the single most cost-effective solutions our nation can deploy to help states achieve and maintain healthy air in communities out of compliance with health-based national air quality standards. We cannot afford to delay these vital clean air protections for millions of Americans.

In a May 2010 Rose Garden ceremony, President Obama announced his intention to finalize a Tier 3 program by 2012 that would reduce sulfur levels in gasoline and introduce cleaner cars, light trucks and sport-utility vehicles on the same schedule as his already-finalized greenhouse gas program. Proposing this program now will help ensure that the President’s commitment is kept. Thus, we strongly urge you to propose this program as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Frances Beinecke
President
Natural Resources Defense Council

Kevin Knobloch
President
Union of Concerned Scientists

Michael Brune
Executive Director
Sierra Club

Fred Krupp
President
Environmental Defense Fund

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