

OAQPS Air Toxics Strategy – An Overview

OAQPS HAS DEVELOPED A STRATEGY TO IMPROVE ITS INTERNAL APPROACH AND EXTERNAL CONNECTION WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS FOR ADDRESSING AIR TOXICS.

INTRODUCTION

Under the Clean Air Act (CAA), EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards (OAQPS) is responsible for establishing, and periodically reviewing national emission standards that regulate the amount of air toxics that can be emitted to the outdoor air from stationary sources. OAQPS also has a responsibility to work in partnership with state and local air agencies to prevent and control air pollution, including air toxics.

Many other governmental and non-governmental organizations are also involved with addressing air toxics issues. These include other EPA offices, other federal agencies, state and local air agencies, tribal government, as well as local elected officials and community groups. Depending on the specific air toxics issue, these other organizations may play a lead role in characterizing and/or mitigating the issue.

From 1990 to the Present

Since 1990, there have been significant reductions in air toxics emissions and improvements in public health protection through CAA regulatory programs. While we have made progress, there are still a number of challenges related to listed hazardous air pollutants (HAPs) (e.g., ethylene oxide) as well as other substances that are not listed as HAPs. Many air toxics issues are localized and may disproportionately affect communities, including minority, low-income, and indigenous communities. To nimbly and effectively identify and resolve current, emerging, and future air toxics issues, we have drafted a strategy for improving how we work internally within OAQPS (and within EPA at the Headquarters and Regional Office levels), and how we work externally with our state, local, tribal partners, and interested stakeholders.

Future

Implementing the strategy requires shifting to a new paradigm – to a more collaborative, integrated approach for identifying, analyzing, and addressing air toxics issues in a systematic manner. This includes:

- Working without silos, and more collaboratively, within and outside of EPA;
- Enhanced coordination, collaboration, and communication; and
- Establishing a systematic approach within the CAA framework for identifying and addressing air toxics issues.

THE AIR TOXICS STRATEGY

A focus of the strategy is to provide structure to the air toxics program so that we can more effectively address air toxics issues, including associated environmental justice issues. At the core of the strategy is coordination, collaboration, and communication within OAQPS (and within EPA) and with our regulatory partners and stakeholders.

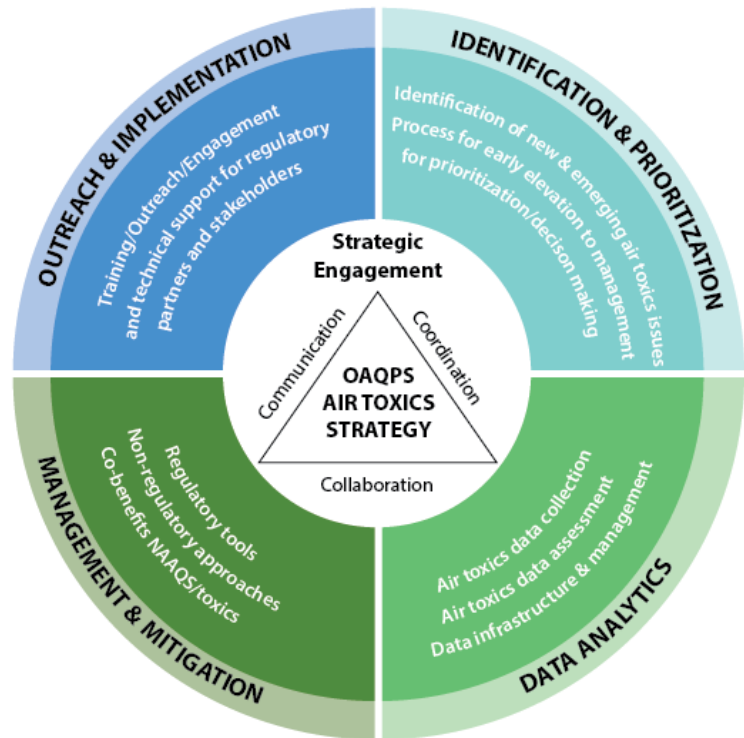
The four key components of the air toxics program, as illustrated in the graphic, are:

1. Identification and prioritization of air toxics issues
2. Air toxics data analytics
3. Management and mitigation of air toxics
4. Outreach and implementation

The strategy reflects the interconnectedness of these components and emphasizes the importance of strategic engagement across the entire program.

As part of the strategy, we have developed a systematic process for identifying and effectively addressing new and emerging air toxics issues. The process includes the following five key steps:

1. Early identification of potential new and emerging issues that relies on strategic engagement.
2. Preliminary characterization of the issue by a new EPA team – the Air Toxics Evaluation and Screening Team.
3. Early communication of the issue to senior management.
4. When relevant, development of an analysis and/or action plan with clear goals, options for what could be done based on data/findings, roles and responsibilities, and a plan for communication of analytical results and next steps.
5. Implementation of the preferred option for addressing the issue.



EXPECTED RESULTS

Through implementation of the strategy, including enhanced collaboration and more meaningful engagement with our regulatory partners and stakeholders, we expect to:

- Proactively identify and address air toxics issues.
- Achieve better outcomes (due to addressing air toxics issues in a systematic manner).
- Improve public health protection and outcomes for communities, including minority, low-income, and indigenous communities.
- Develop approaches that are appropriately scaled to the issue and coordinated, as necessary, nationally.
- Improve efficiencies in the regulatory program, with smarter rules and targeted emission reductions.

The shift to this new paradigm for OAQPS' air toxics program will take time, and we welcome your involvement and support. By sharing our vision for air toxics, we hope to spark your interest and encourage you to share your ideas with us.