

Attorney General Raoul Urges EPA To Adopt Strict Standards To Protect The Public From Particulate Matter Pollution

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CHICAGO - Attorney General Kwame Raoul, as part of a coalition of attorneys general, urged the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to adopt stringent standards under the Clean Air Act that protect public health against particulate matter (PM) pollution. These standards, known as the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), are critical to efforts to improve air quality and the health of residents disproportionately impacted by higher PM levels.

“Particulate matter pollution has been proven to be harmful to human health,” Raoul said. “It is urgent that the EPA establish sufficient guidelines to address the health threat posed by these contaminants, especially for populations that are disproportionately exposed.”

Particulate matter is a pollutant emitted from a variety of sources including vehicles, factories and construction sites. Under the Clean Air Act, the EPA is required to set NAAQS for several pollutants, including PM, at a level that protects public health and welfare. Once the NAAQS are set, states are tasked with implementing those standards.

In [the comment letter](#) to the EPA, Raoul calls for more protective federal standards for PM pollution to ensure healthier levels of air quality for Illinois residents.

Also referred to as soot, PM is a mixture of microscopic solids and liquid droplets suspended in the air that can cause serious health problems, including increased rates of heart disease, serious respiratory impacts, and increased death rates. Both long-term and short-term exposure have been shown to cause harmful health impacts. Long-term exposure, such as that experienced by people living for many years in areas with high PM levels, has been associated with premature death, reduced lung function, and the development of chronic bronchitis. Short-term exposure to particles – for hours or days – can aggravate lung disease, causing asthma attacks, acute bronchitis, and increased susceptibility to respiratory infections. Children, older Americans, and people with preexisting heart and lung disease are the most susceptible to health complications due to PM exposure.

The EPA has proposed new PM NAAQS to replace standards originally issued several years ago – which the Trump administration refused to lower, despite overwhelming evidence that certain standards failed to protect the public health and welfare as required by the Clean Air Act. In 2021, Illinois and a multistate coalition [sued the federal government](#) over its refusal to update the PM NAAQS and have since successfully petitioned the EPA to reconsider that decision.

Raoul and the coalition now urge the EPA to take long-necessary action and adopt strict standards for particulate matter pollution to protect human health in all communities, including sensitive populations and communities that have historically suffered disproportionately severe PM exposure.

Attorney General Raoul is joined in filing the comment letter by the attorneys general of California, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin and the city of New York.