



# ON THE AIR

Fall  
2005

A Newsletter about  
Clean Air. Provided  
by Spokane County  
Air Pollution  
Control Authority  
(SCAPCA)

## Spokane's Air Quality Meets Clean Air Standards

After decades-long efforts to attain health standards for two federally regulated air pollutants, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced in late August its official redesignation of Spokane to attainment status for carbon monoxide and particulate matter.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless, poisonous gas which is a byproduct of incomplete combustion. Automobile emissions are the largest contributor to carbon monoxide pollution. Particulate Matter measuring 10 microns in diameter or less, referred to as PM<sub>10</sub>, is primarily

ly composed of dust and smoke particles. Spokane's air monitoring network has consistently measured compliance with clean air standards for these two pollutants for the past eight years.

So, what got us to where we are today? A series of efforts, all of which combined

more thorough cleaning of paved roads, using cleaner



Tom Eaton, of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, congratulating Spokane on its attainment of clean air standards at a recent ceremony in Riverfront Park.

**“Today, we celebrate success but continue to look forward, striving for an even better future where we can provide healthful air quality to our citizens year round.”**

to bring Spokane into attainment of the standards, including better automobile technology— with the advent of catalytic converters, electronic fuel injection, and oxygen sensors, just to name a few of the technological improvements. Other factors include, but are not limited to, cleaner wood heating devices, reduced use of wood heating,

traction sand, and using less of it in favor of chemical liquid deicers.

While it's great to declare success on a couple of fronts, we have more work to do. Spokane's air quality is displaying a slow but steady upward trend in ozone levels. In addition, as we monitor for fine particles (what we call

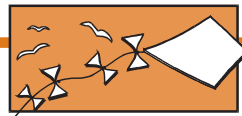
PM<sub>2.5</sub>), we are recording levels at times that do not yet exceed the federal standard, but fall within the range deemed to be unhealthy for sensitive groups.

In addition, SCAPCA has embarked on its first air toxics monitoring study. Preliminary results suggest that Spokane's urban air has concentrations of chemicals that may pose a higher health risk to the public than we would like to see.

For more information about air quality in Spokane, including details on the air toxics study currently underway, visit [www.scapca.org](http://www.scapca.org).

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- ◆ Leadership Change at SCAPCA



# Washington's New Clean Car Standards



## Background

The Washington State Legislature passed legislation adopting clean car standards for new cars sold in Washington. The bill was signed into law by the Governor on May 6, 2005. Washington's law states that Washington will only require clean car standards if Oregon adopts them as well, which Oregon recently did. Therefore, the Washington Department of Ecology plans to adopt regulations to enact the new standards by December, so that the new law will apply to 2009 model-year vehicles.

### Q: What are clean car standards?

A: There are two types of auto emission standards for new cars: "federal standards" and stricter "clean car standards." Because California was the first of nine states to adopt the clean car standards, they are sometimes referred to as "California car standards." The federal Clean Air Act allows states to choose which standards they will use.

### Q: What's the difference between these two types of standards?

A: Clean car standards require better pollution control on vehicles, which means that cars meeting these standards emit less pollution. Clean car standards significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as well as smog forming emissions from vehicles.

### Q: Why did our legislature adopt stricter standards?

A: In Washington, motor vehicles produce over half of the pollutants that cause cancer, asthma, and other health problems. Air pollution also affects our economy. The annual economic cost to our state from air pollution-related death and illness is at least \$500 million.

Motor vehicles produce the majority of greenhouse gas emissions, which contribute to Global Warming. Effects of Global Warming include reduced snow pack, low summer stream flows, more winter flooding, increased coastal erosion, reduced water supplies for people and agriculture, and further loss of salmon habitat.

### Q: How will these standards help?

A: These standards are the most effective tool available to have a significant impact on reducing air pollution from automobiles. Specifically, new vehicles that meet clean car standards reduce smog-forming pollutants by up to 13% and reduce toxic air pollutants by up to 19%. They also emit 24-32% fewer greenhouse gases (depending on vehicle size) than vehicles that meet federal standards.

### Q: Are "clean cars" more expensive?

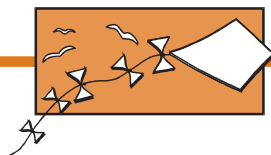
A: Initially, yes. Clean cars cost slightly more; however, this is offset by the savings in fuel. In 2012, vehicles meeting the standards will probably cost about \$300 more than other vehicles; and in 2016, about \$1,000 more. At current gas prices, savings in fuel costs is esti-

mated to be \$3,500 over the useful life of a vehicle. Savings in fuel costs also have other economic benefits. Economists estimate that money not spent on gasoline will go into our local economy, generating about 9,000 additional jobs by 2020. An increasing market for clean cars reduces manufacturing costs for them, which will eventually lower the cost to consumers.

### Q: Does this law mean we'll have fewer vehicles to choose from?

A: No. In fact, clean car standards actually give new car buyers more choices, because they include advanced, super-low-emissions vehicles that are only available in states with these standards. Clean car vehicles come in all makes and models, including SUVs, and pickup trucks. They are ordinary cars; there only difference is that they pollute less because they have better pollution control technologies. A recent poll showed almost 75 percent of Washington citizens want to buy cleaner cars. And states with clean car standards get cars with more advanced technology, like hybrids, without the current 6-12 month wait.

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## Clean Cars

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**Q:** *If cars are cleaner, will we still need the emissions testing program?*

**A:** Emissions testing for all vehicles will be phased out by 2020, due to improved air quality and fewer benefits from testing.

Before it ends in 2020, the Department of Ecology's Emission Check Program will change as follows:

- ☆ Starting in 2009, the first year that clean car standards will apply in Washington, new model year vehicles will not have to be tested. Most new vehicles registered in Washington after 2009 will meet clean car emissions standards. Used vehicles that don't meet clean car standards may still be brought in from another state.
- ☆ In 2012, emission testing can be at authorized dealers and repair shops. The cost of tests at private businesses will be set by the dealer or repair shop, not by Ecology.

**Q:** *Where is the rulemaking process now, and where can I get more information?*

Ecology plans to adopt regulations to enact the new standards by December so that the new law will apply to 2009 model-year vehicles. Federal law requires that auto manufacturers be given lead time of at least two model years so they can adapt to the new regulations.

For more information and to view the proposed regulation, visit: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/air/cars/NewCarStuff/newCarInformation.htm>.

## Ron Edgar Appointed Interim SCAPCA Director

The SCAPCA Board of Directors has named Ron Edgar, the agency's Chief of Technical Services, as Interim Director of the Agency, following the resignation of Eric Skelton on September 30, 2005.

Edgar began work at SCAPCA in 1977. He will lead the agency until a permanent Director is hired, which is expected to occur in early 2006.

The SCAPCA Board of Directors is

currently forming a search committee, which will conduct a nationwide search.

SCAPCA Board meetings are held the first Thursday, of each month, unless otherwise publicized. The meetings begin at 9 a.m., in the Commissioner's Hearing Room, lower level, Spokane County Public Works Building, 1026 W. Broadway Ave. Meeting agendas and minutes are available on SCAPCA's website at [www.scapca.org](http://www.scapca.org).

## Oxygenated Fuel Program Ends

Spokane's wintertime oxygenated fuel program has come to an end after 13 years. The program was federally mandated in 1992, after Spokane failed to meet health-based standards for carbon monoxide (CO). Spokane has not exceeded the standard for several years and was recently redesignated to "attainment" status by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Ron Edgar, SCAPCA's Chief of Technical Services, points out that since the program's inception, Spokane's CO emissions have been cut at least in half, maybe a little more. "While we could still have some high days, it appears that, thanks to new automotive technology, Spokane is well on its way to cleaner, healthier air," added Edgar.

The 1992 mandate required all retail gasoline dispensing facilities in Spokane County to sell only oxygenated gasoline during a 6-month season (September through February.) Later, the season was



shortened to five months, October through February.

Oxygenation is the process of adding a substance, such as ethanol, to a fuel in order to increase the amount of oxygen in the fuel blend. The increase in oxygen reduces the amount of carbon monoxide released into the air because it increases the efficiency of the combustion process. The blenders that supply Spokane County gas stations with fuel chose to oxygenate their gasoline with ethanol. Ethanol has the highest oxygen level (at 3.5%) and is renewable due to the fact that it is produced from corn.

Inhaling elevated levels of CO is a health hazard. It is an odorless, colorless, poisonous gas that absorbs into the body at a higher rate than oxygen.

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## ◆ AIR QUALITY CALENDAR ◆

Dec. 1: SCAPCA monthly Board of Directors meeting. The meetings begin at 9 a.m., in the Commissioners Hearing Room, Lower Level, Spokane County Public Works Building, 1026 West Broadway Ave. Meeting agendas and minutes are available at [www.scapca.org](http://www.scapca.org), or call SCAPCA at 477-4727. Meetings are held the first Thursday of each month, unless otherwise publicized. Special Accommodations: The hearing room is wheelchair accessible. Call SCAPCA 48 hours in advance to request additional accommodations.

## Oxygenated Fuel Mandate Ends

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When inhaled, it combines with hemoglobin in the bloodstream, preventing oxygen from being absorbed. This is why exposure is especially harmful to people who already suffer from respiratory complications.

“Once we measured attainment of the CO standard and completed all of the required control measures in our attainment plan, a 10-year maintenance plan was submitted and approved by EPA. The maintenance plan demonstrates that we will continue to meet the CO standard without the oxygenated fuel mandate,” said Edgar.

One factor that has contributed a great deal to the solution is the devel-

opment of new automotive technology. “New automobiles with their low emissions are the main reason we are seeing such low values.”

Even though SCAPCA no longer mandates the wintertime use of oxygenated fuel, some gasoline retailers may continue to sell it on their own. If this is the case, they are required to have the pumps labeled accordingly.

“Generally, I think it is a good thing that oxygenated fuel is still available,” said Edgar. “For some cars it still has air quality benefits, mostly it’s an alternative to foreign oil and it’s an agricultural product.”

*By Tessa Schilter,  
Communications Intern*

## Take Note!

*On the Air* is a quarterly publication of the Spokane County Air Pollution Control Authority. Its purpose is to educate local citizens on all aspects of outdoor air pollution.

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