



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY
Health Department

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For immediate release

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Public Invited to Comment on Proposed Air-Quality Rule Changes

Local health officials are proposing to revise the county's outdoor air-quality regulations to meet more stringent standards adopted in 2006 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The public can comment on the proposed revisions from July 19 through Aug. 18.

The current county air-quality regulations do not comply with the new federal standards, according to Kathy Moore, administrator of the Environmental Services Division of the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department. Generally, the proposed revisions would:

- Set local air pollution standards to match the standards required by EPA for particulate matter;
- Redefine air-quality ratings for the public ("Good," "Watch," and "Poor") to reflect the new particulate standards;
- Extend the period during which air-quality regulations are in effect to year-round; and
- Increase fines for violation of the county air-quality regulations.

The proposed regulations would reduce the level of fine particulate matter allowed in the air from 65 micrograms per cubic meter to 35 micrograms/cubic meter. Fine particulate matter is sooty pollution caused primarily by burning solid fuels and vehicle exhaust.

"Many studies have linked poor air quality with an increase in hospital admissions and emergency room visits related to asthma and heart disease," Moore said. "As we work to meet federal standards, we also have a chance to better protect the health of people who suffer most when our air quality is poor."

The revised regulations would affect anyone who lives or works in the Lewis and Clark County Air Pollution Control District and who operates diesel engines or solid-fuel-burning devices like wood stoves, outdoor wood-fired boilers, and incinerators. More information, including a map of the pollution control district, is available on the health department Web site at www.lewisandclarkhealth.org.

The new regulations were proposed by the health department and the Board of Health. They must be reviewed and approved by the Lewis and Clark County Commission and the Montana Board of Environmental Review before they can be adopted.

The public will have several opportunities to share their views of the proposed regulations with local officials. So far, the following public meetings have been scheduled:

- **Aug. 2:** Presentation to the East Helena City Council, 7 p.m., East Helena City Hall
- **Aug. 4:** Presentation to the joint city and county commissions, 4 p.m., Room 326, City-County Building, 316 N. Park Ave., Helena
- **Aug. 11:** Public hearing before the county commission, 9 a.m., Room 330, City-County Building
- **Aug. 23:** Decision by county commission on whether to approve new regulations, 9 a.m., Room 330, City-County Building

Upon final approval by the county commission, the regulations will be submitted to the Montana Board of Environmental Review for a final public hearing. The time and place have yet to be determined.

Residents may send comments on the proposed regulations to outdooraq@co.lewis-clark.mt.us or Air Quality Regulations, Environmental Services Division, 316 North Park Avenue, Helena, MT 59623.

Anyone who would like to be on an “interested parties” list to get public notices regarding the proposed regulations may call the health department at 406-457-8908, or e-mail outdoorAQ@co.lewis-clark.mt.us.

For more information, contact the Environmental Services Division at 406-447-8351.

The Lewis & Clark City-County Health Department’s mission is to improve and protect the health of all Lewis & Clark County residents.

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