

# EPA tightens sulfur dioxide limits

June 4 2010

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(AP) -- Good news for asthmatics, children, the elderly and those who have breathing disorders.

For the first time in nearly 40 years, the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) on Thursday issued standards that lower the acceptable levels of sulfur dioxide emissions and increase the intervals the gas is monitored.

Under the new rules, sulfur dioxide levels will be cut nearly in half from the current 140 parts per billion averaged over 24 hours to 75 parts per billion measured hourly.

The new rules, which go into effect 60 days after publication in the Federal Register, are designed to protect against short-term exposure to sulfur dioxide, produced when [power plants](#) or other industrial facilities burn coal as an energy source. The states will have to submit implementation plans by June 2011, and the first areas that won't meet the standard identified the following year.

The EPA estimates that the rule change will result in \$13 billion to \$33 billion annually in health cost savings and prevent 2,300 to 5,900 premature deaths and 54,000 [asthma](#) attacks a year. The estimated cost in 2020 to fully implement this standard is \$1.5 billion.

Wednesday's final rule also changes the air quality index to reflect the revised sulfur dioxide standard.

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