

US keeps air pollution standard established under Obama

February 26 2019, by Matthew Brown

U.S. environmental regulators on Tuesday announced they are leaving intact an air quality standard for power plant pollution that can worsen asthma in children, despite calls by health advocates for a tougher standard.

The move keeps in place a threshold for [sulfur dioxide](#) pollution established in 2010 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under President Barack Obama. Sulfur dioxide comes from burning coal to produce electricity and from other industrial sources.

The American Lung Association and other groups had urged EPA to lower the amount of the [pollution](#) it allows, from 75 parts per billion of sulfur dioxide in ambient air to 50 parts per billion.

The existing standard puts millions of people at increased risk of asthma attacks, said Janice Nolen, the association's [vice president](#).

On the other side of the issue, the American Petroleum Institute contended the Obama-era rules were overly stringent and wanted them relaxed.

EPA regulators rejected both arguments and said a lengthy review confirmed the existing standard was both necessary and sufficient to protect [public health](#).

Agency officials cited studies that show people with asthma can

experience problems following just five minutes of exposure to air with elevated sulfur dioxide levels.

Emissions of the pollutant dropped sharply in recent decades due to industry regulations and the declining use of coal among electric utilities.

Between 2010 and 2016, [sulfur](#) dioxide emissions nationwide dropped 64 percent, according to the EPA.

Nevertheless, dozens of areas across the U.S. remain out of compliance with the 2010 standard. More than 3 million people live in those areas, Nolen said.

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