

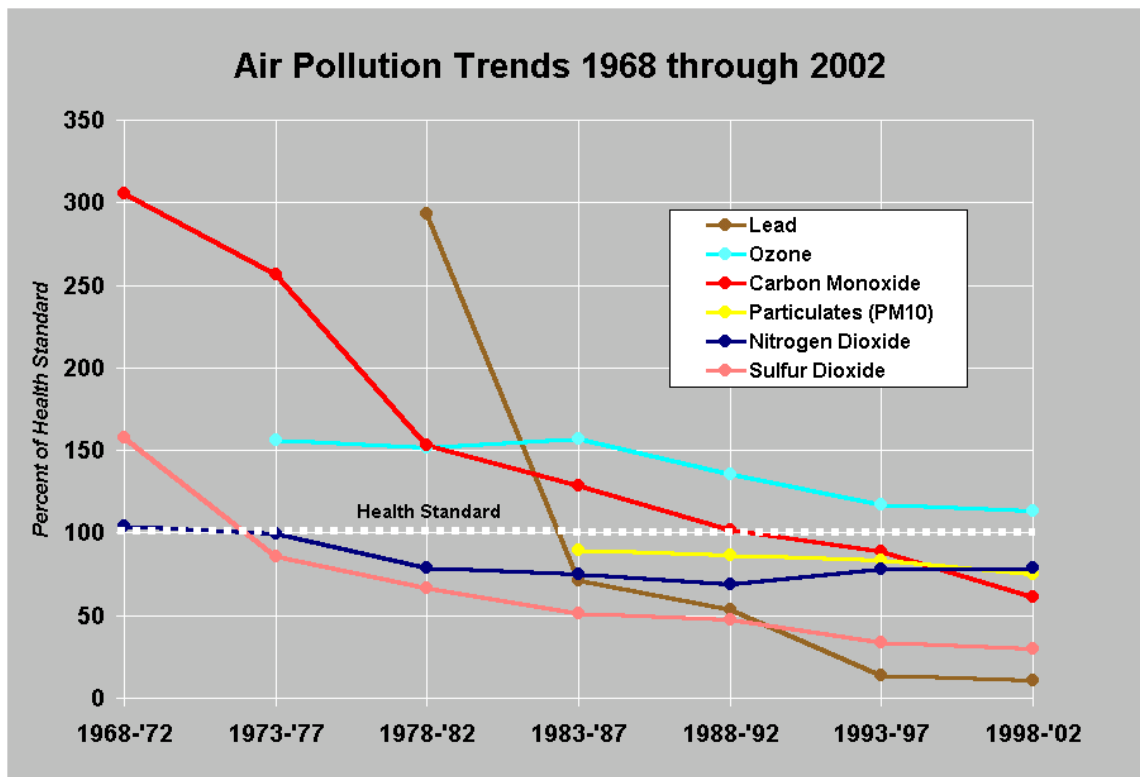


2002 Introduction

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

INTRODUCTION

Air Quality in New Jersey has significantly improved since the passage of the Clean Air Act in 1970. As the chart below indicates, New Jersey is now in compliance with all National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), except for ozone. These improvements are the result of aggressive pollution control programs implemented in New Jersey as well as regional emission reduction strategies involving other states.



But air quality problems do remain in the state. Ozone continues to be a significant problem in the summer months, and has been found to have serious health effects at lower levels than previously thought. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) revised the NAAQS for ozone in 1997 to account for this new health information. Although the standard changes were challenged, the courts eventually upheld them. If the new standards for ozone are to be met, additional emission reduction strategies will have to be implemented.

At the same time the USEPA revised the standards for ozone, they promulgated a new standard for fine particles. Fine particles are defined as particles less than 2.5 micrometers in diameter and are referred to as PM2.5. These small particles have been found to have a greater impact on public health than larger particles, which were the focus of the previous standards. Early data collected on PM2.5 levels in New Jersey presented in this report indicate that fine particles are likely to be a problem in some areas of the state.

In addition to ozone and PM2.5, there is increasing concern about a class of air pollutants termed "air toxics". These pollutants include substances known to cause cancer or other serious health problems. The list of potential air toxics is very large and includes many different types of compounds from heavy metals to toxic volatile organic compounds such as benzene. New Jersey is using the results of an EPA air toxics study and other information to address this complex problem. More comprehensive monitoring of air toxics in New Jersey is being implemented and data from that program is presented in this report.

Questions or comments concerning this report can be made by e-mailing us at bamweb@dep.state.nj.us, by phone at (609) 292-0138 or by writing to us at:

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