

**STATE, LOCAL AIR AGENCIES HAIL ‘LANDMARK’ EPA PLAN  
TO CLEAN UP CARS, SUVs, GASOLINE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**CONTACT: BILL BECKER (202) 624-7864**

Washington, D.C., December 21, 1999 – State and local air pollution control officials today hailed the “landmark” decision by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to clean up cars, sport utility vehicles and minivans and the gasoline that fuels them.

“There is no bigger single action the federal government could take to address the health and environmental problems posed by air pollution,” said S. William Becker, Executive Director of the State and Territorial Air Pollution Program Administrators and the Association of Local Air Pollution Control Officials (STAPPA/ALAPCO). “This rule is cost effective, inexpensive to consumers and provides huge air quality benefits,” Becker continued.

The EPA plan requires cleaner cars, SUVs, minivans and gasoline starting in 2004. By 2009, even the biggest SUVs would have to meet the same strict pollution control standards as automobiles. Currently, SUVs and minivans are subject to more lenient emission standards than passenger cars. Under the plan, new cars would be about 90 percent cleaner, and SUVs about 95 percent cleaner, than the average new vehicle sold today. To make it easier for automakers to meet the new standards, EPA is requiring oil refiners to remove about 90 percent of the sulfur in gasoline. Sulfur is a poison that inhibits performance of catalytic converters used to control vehicle exhaust.

“State and local air agencies are delighted that we could play a constructive role in helping craft this cleanup strategy,” said Becker, “and even more happy that EPA and the White House have listened to us and adopted an aggressive plan to address this major public health threat. The Administration’s leadership and commitment on this issue have been truly outstanding.” Becker noted that state and local air officials had urged EPA to adopt the tough new vehicle and gasoline standards.

(more)

“These new programs will play a key role in state and local efforts to achieve and sustain health-based air quality standards and meet clean air goals across the country, noted Ronald C. Methier, Chief of the Georgia Environmental Protection Division’s Air Protection Branch and President of STAPPA. “This year, Atlanta experienced its worst smog season ever. Our dramatic population growth rate, accompanied by more vehicles being driven more miles each year in the area, contributes substantially to our smog problem. Cleaner cars and cleaner gasoline will not only help Atlanta and other areas across the country clean up persistent ozone problems, they will also reduce particulate soot, toxic air pollution, acid rain, regional haze and greenhouse gases nationwide,” Methier continued.

“This action is a tremendous example of how the federal/state/local partnership can work effectively,” said ALAPCO President Eric P. Skelton, Director of the Spokane County Air Pollution Control Authority. Commending EPA for the inclusive and deliberative process it undertook to develop this plan, Skelton added, “We hope EPA will follow a similar collaborative approach in tackling another huge air pollution challenge high on state and local air agencies’ list of priorities – cleaning up big diesel trucks, other diesel engines and diesel fuel.” EPA is expected to propose tough new diesel truck and fuel standards early next year.

STAPPA/ALAPCO represents air pollution control agencies in the 55 states and territories and more than 165 metropolitan areas across the country.

For more information, visit STAPPA/ALAPCO’s web site at [www.4cleanair.org/comments.html](http://www.4cleanair.org/comments.html).

###