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OTC STATES AGREE ON MULTIPOLLUTANT CAPS NECESSARY FOR CLEAN AIR

(February 2, 2004, Washington DC) – The Ozone Transport Commission (OTC) announces its adoption of a formal position on emission reductions needed from the electric generating sector. The position calls for strict caps on nitrogen oxides (NOx), sulfur dioxide (SO₂) and mercury emissions. The plan addresses power plants, which are the chief contributors of these pollutants in the air, resulting in problems such as acid rain, regional haze, ground-level ozone and mercury deposition.

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The OTC position responds to the EPA Interstate Air Quality rulemaking and the President's Clear Skies Initiative, which each promote a "cap and trade" program for power plants, however these plans make fewer emission reductions and occur too late to meet EPA's national health standards for air quality.

According to OTC Chair and New Jersey Environmental Commissioner Bradley M. Campbell, "The caps and the timeline in the OTC position represent cost-effective and tighter safeguards to save more lives. Federal implementation of the OTC position will significantly reduce pollutants, including mercury in air, water and aquatic life."

"The EPA has established air quality standards to protect the health of our citizens. The caps and the timeline in the OTC platform represent the reductions that are needed to achieve standards cost-effectively, and on time," said Christopher Recchia, OTC's Executive Director.

Commissioner Campbell added, "Many states cannot meet the national health-based standards for ozone and particulates without reductions from upwind sources."

"The OTC member states have already achieved a 70% reduction in emissions from 1995 levels, whereas the rest of the country has reduced emissions only by about 10% in this period. This position addresses the transport of pollutants across state boundaries and evens the playing field for industry" said Recchia.

"The EPA proposal, as with Clear Skies before it, proposes a cap and trade program for NOx and SO₂, but fails to reduce emissions sufficiently to meet the health standards" said Recchia. "As a result, tens of thousands of additional premature deaths will needlessly occur. These deaths could be avoided if the OTC position is put into effect."

Over the past year, a variety of pollution reduction plans have been proposed. The OTC platform most closely resembles the reductions EPA first proposed in 2000, when it outlined the reductions needed to meet National Ambient Air Quality Standards throughout the U.S.

Kendl P. Philbrick, Acting Secretary of the Maryland Department of the Environment said, "This is an issue of great importance to states in the Northeast, but it really goes beyond the interests of a single region. It requires that every state understand and take responsibility for actions that affect people beyond its borders--in this case, for upwind states to require effective controls on power plants that are sending pollutants into Maryland and the Northeast. We look forward to working with all the states, EPA and Congress to adopt OTC's approach to reducing acid rain and ground-level ozone."

The OTC position calls for NO_x and SO₂ emissions from these sources to be capped at 1.87 million and 3.0 million tons respectively by 2008, and 1.28 million and 2.0 million tons by 2012. In addition, OTC believes initial mercury control levels should not exceed 15 tons, with an ultimate performance requirement that achieves approximately 5 tons per year by 2015, a 90% reduction from current emissions. Although supportive of cap and trade programs generally, the OTC states were united that mercury, a neurotoxin, should not be traded between facilities, and that ultimately all plants should achieve mercury controls. The benefits of OTC's approach exceed the costs by at least 10:1.

OTC also stated its preference for Congress to act on Carbon and other Greenhouse gases, acknowledging that greenhouse gases are an important consideration and that any improvements to reduce carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases would automatically reduce ozone, smog and its precursors. Its position, however, emphasized the need to address the other pollutants right away.

A copy of the OTC's multi-pollutant position is available on the OTC website at www.otcair.org.

OTC is a multi-state organization whose main focus is to develop regional solutions to the ground-level ozone problem in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast region of the U.S. It is committed to finding innovative approaches that maximize public health and environmental benefits. OTC was created by Congress, and its members include: Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Virginia.