



ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

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To advance the understanding of air-borne particulate matter and air quality, NARSTO is making its report, Particulate Matter Science for Policy Makers, available on the World Wide Web. The report serves as a scientific resource for all government and industry officials involved in reducing air pollution throughout North America.

The report should be useful to U.S. policy-makers who have just received guidance from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency concerning the identification of areas that meet and do not meet EPA's national air quality standards for fine particles. States and tribes will have until February 15, 2004, to make their recommendations and EPA will have until December 15, 2004, to make final designations. State and tribes will have until 2007 to develop strategies for meeting those standards. The NARSTO report points out that, to be most effective, strategies will need to consider local and distant sources of air pollution, prevailing weather conditions, topography and seasonal variations. In addition, plans will have to be tailored specifically to each region,

The report is available in three languages – in English, French, and Spanish for use by Canadian, Mexican, and U.S. officials and provides a comprehensive overview of air quality and fine particle processes across North America. It also highlights current knowledge about nine key regions, including pollution-prone areas such as Los Angeles and urban areas in the Eastern United States. The entire report, including its executive summary, easy-to-use synthesis section, and detailed science chapters, is available at www.cgenv.com/narsto.

Particulate Matter Science for Policy Makers was written by 42 leading scientists from the United States, Canada, and Mexico and was commissioned by NARSTO, a North American consortium for atmospheric research in support of air quality management. The consortium's partners include federal and state agencies, industrial organizations and universities. NARSTO's mission is to provide scientific advice that guides action to reduce air pollution, including ground-level ozone and airborne particles.

Reducing air-borne particles is complex task, because particles are produced by a wide variety of sources and can be formed under many different conditions. Some particles result from forest fires and are considered natural in origin. However, most of the smallest airborne particles, which are of greatest health concern, originate from the burning of fossil fuels in motor vehicles, homes, industry and electric utilities.

There is a considerable and growing body of evidence, that shows an association between short- and long-term exposures to airborne particles and adverse health impacts, especially on the cardio-respiratory system. Fine particles are of greatest concern, because they are so small that they can penetrate deeply into the lungs and aggravate existing heart and lung disorders.

For more information and to download the report, visit www.cgenv.com/narsto. Links to NARSTO's website are welcome. For instructions, please contact Mr. Jeffrey West at Jeffrey.west@noaa.gov.