



**DEPARTMENT of ENVIRONMENT
and NATURAL RESOURCES**

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EPA Recognizes Rapid City Air Quality

PIERRE – The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has announced that Rapid City will officially be designated as in attainment of the federal national ambient air quality standard for dust particles designated as PM10 on April 5.

“We are very pleased that the EPA has recognized the cooperative efforts of the city, the county, the state and our private industry partners as we have worked together to improve air quality in the Rapid City community,” said Rapid City Mayor Jim Shaw in expressing his delight upon hearing that Rapid City has been declared an air quality attainment area. “The designation recognizes the excellent quality of life enjoyed by Rapid City residents and will support the community's on-going economic development efforts as we continue to seek to attract high quality businesses and jobs to the Black Hills.”

Jeni Leberknight, who is the current chair of the Rapid City Area Air Quality Board, added, “Having EPA finally designate Rapid City as being in attainment of the federal air quality standards has been the goal of this board since it was formed. The entire board is extremely pleased that all those efforts have paid off.”

The state Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) began working with local government and industry officials to attain the standard in 1978 when the first violation of the dust standard was measured in Rapid City. Numerous steps have been taken by city, county, and industry to reduce dust levels.

Those efforts include forming a local Rapid City Area Air Quality Board to control fugitive dust sources from such areas as construction sites and gravel alleys and parking lots. As a result, many gravel alleys and parking lots in Rapid City have been paved.

Rapid City and Pennington County efforts include changing their street cleaning and sanding operations from mechanical to vacuum sweepers, reducing the amount of sanding material applied, and beginning to use magnesium chloride to treat streets.

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DENR, with the cooperation of the local air board and industrial sources, adopted street sanding requirements, began regulating construction activities on state property, and developed a Natural Events Action Plan that was approved by EPA. The plan identifies Best Available Control Measures for operations that generate dust from something other than a stack, and utilizes the National Weather Service to trigger alerts for industry and the public during period of potential high concentrations of dust. The alerts allow industry to take extra steps to minimize their dust, and also encourage the public, especially those most susceptible to dusty conditions, to go indoors or take other steps to protect themselves.

Rapid City was at risk of being a nonattainment area if the state, local governments and industry had not worked together. Under a nonattainment designation, the federal Clean Air Act authorizes EPA to impose certain sanctions, such as withholding federal highway funds from the area or prohibiting the issuance of air quality permits to new development that would add to existing dust levels.

“All of these steps have been instrumental in helping Rapid City attain this dust standard and must continue to ensure the city’s attainment status is maintained,” said DENR Secretary Steve Pirner.

PM10 are dust particles that are less than or equal to 10 microns in diameter, which is about one-seventh the width of a human hair. A person cannot see PM10 particles without the aid of magnification.

Visit www.state.sd.us/denr/DES/AirQuality/Monitoring/rapid.htm for a map of air monitoring sites in the Rapid City area.