

Desk Statement: Assessment of the Early Action Compact Program

6/24/09

- EPA undertook this internal assessment of the Early Action Compact (EAC) Program to learn what worked well and what did not.
- The study concluded that the EAC Program was useful in bringing together people in communities and educating them about air quality, health problems associated with air pollution, and opportunities to collaborate toward a common environmental goal.
- It noted that the EAC Program encouraged the development and adoption of local emission reduction measures but that it is very difficult to separate out the air quality benefits of this initiative from other programs.
- Most progress towards ozone attainment in the East generally came from national measures such as vehicle standards and power plant controls.
- The Agency does not have plans to proceed with an EAC program for the 2008 ozone standard *BUT* is continuing to actively work with communities to pursue clean air goals.

Summary

- The assessment is not a formal program evaluation and has several limitations -- it did not:
 - Compare emission reductions of EAC versus non-EAC areas in terms of both quantities and implementation timeframes;
 - Assess air quality for EAC areas past 2007; and
 - Compare EAC areas with non-EAC areas with respect to certain key areas.
- Because of the assessment's limitations, it is difficult to draw hard findings and conclusions.
- However, the assessment was able to make a number of observations, including:
 - The EAC Program was generally popular with participating state and local officials who indicated it provided the right combination of incentives, flexibility, and structure to foster a collaborative environment.
 - For the vast majority of the areas included in this assessment, the EAC Program appeared to encourage successfully the development and adoption of quantifiable, local emission reduction control measures by the program deadline.
 - The analysis found that the changes in air quality in eastern EAC Program areas were consistent with those observed in non-EAC areas.

Background

- In 2002, EPA initiated the EAC Program to make an early implementation option available that provided for cleaner air sooner than required under the Clean Air Act.
- In exchange for early implementation action for the 1997 ozone standard, EPA deferred the effective dates of designation for those areas that would have been designated nonattainment for the 1997 8-hour ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standard.
- Ultimately, 28 of 29 areas attained the 1997 NAAQS by December 2007 and successfully met the requirements of the EAC Program.

Importance of Voluntary Programs Overall

- EPA supports communities to take action to improve air quality and to improve local living environments
- Local communities have not traditionally played a large role in air quality planning efforts
- It is vital for local governments to be engaged in air quality improvement efforts as they are uniquely suited for addressing many activities that contribute to poor air quality that are outside EPA and state government control
- EPA recognizes the hard work and important contribution that local governments and other stakeholders made to the EAC Program's results