

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
Office of the Governor
Timothy M. Kaine

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Contact: Kevin Hall Bill Hayden /VDEQ
Phone: (804) 225-4260 (804) 698-4447
Cell Phone: (804) 393-9406
Internet: www.governor.virginia.gov

www.deq.state.va.us

GOVERNOR KAINE ANNOUNCES AIR QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS IN RICHMOND, HAMPTON ROADS

RICHMOND - Governor Timothy M. Kaine and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency today announced that air quality in Richmond and Hampton Roads now meets the federal standard to protect people's health from ozone pollution. The EPA took the action after determining that air quality in the two areas has improved since the federal government listed them among localities with unhealthy air.

"We have worked diligently for several years to improve air quality in these regions," Governor Kaine said. "This is a huge achievement that lets millions of Virginians breathe easier and brings us closer to our goal of healthy air for every part of the Commonwealth."

In 2004, the EPA designated Richmond and Hampton Roads as "nonattainment" because their air quality did not meet the federal ozone health standard. Outdoor air monitoring data for the 2003-2005 ozone seasons shows that Richmond and Hampton Roads are now meeting the eight-hour ozone standard.

"Ground-level ozone is a significant public health concern, but thanks to federal and state efforts, the air quality in Richmond and Hampton Roads has improved over the past decade," said Donald S. Welsh, regional administrator of EPA's mid-Atlantic Office. "Our redesignation means that residents of these areas are breathing cleaner, healthier air. People can be proud of this accomplishment."

This redesignation to "attainment" by the EPA includes the agency's approval of an air quality maintenance plan submitted by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, showing how Richmond and Hampton Roads will remain in attainment for ozone through 2018. The redesignations will become effective in June.

Northern Virginia remains a part of the ozone transport region, a group of northeastern states that work together to develop regional control strategies to reduce ozone levels. In

June, DEQ will submit a plan to EPA that enables Northern Virginia to meet the air quality standard by 2010. In addition, the Winchester and Roanoke areas have enacted voluntary programs to improve air quality by the end of 2007.

The Richmond area includes the cities of Colonial Heights, Hopewell, Petersburg and Richmond; and the counties of Charles City, Chesterfield, Hanover, Henrico and Prince George. Hampton Roads includes the cities of Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Virginia Beach and Williamsburg; and the counties of Gloucester, James City, Isle of Wight and York.

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