



Media Advisory

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 2, 2011

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**Obama abandons plans to tighten EPA ozone smog standard,
Chicagoans being told air is healthy, evidence shows it's unsafe
**** Interview Opportunity ******

WHAT: President Obama announced this morning that he is not allowing U.S. EPA to tighten their ozone health standard, delaying any decision until at least 2013. The EPA was set to finalize these standards in Aug 2010, but had delayed the decision twice since, most recently in July. The EPA had proposed to fix a flawed and inadequate health standard from 2008 that Administrator Lisa Jackson called, "not legally defensible" as recently as July 2011.

By keeping the standard above what medical experts deem unhealthy, the EPA is not informing people when air quality is unhealthy. The proposed 2008 EPA standard was that ozone smog should be below .75 parts per million (ppm), but the EPA's own panel of medical experts twice found that the standard should be between .6 and .7 ppm. An adequate standard would mean the public is properly informed when ozone (smog) levels are unhealthy for sensitive groups including children, the elderly and people with lung disease.

Air quality in Chicago has frequently reached levels that doctors deem unhealthy – ozone levels were above .6 ppm in the area on Thursday, September 1 – and similar levels are a common summertime occurrence. Because EPA's standard is lax, the public is not notified of these unhealthy levels and is unable to protect themselves from poor air quality that can trigger lung disease symptoms and make it harder to breathe. It also means the EPA will not be able to set pollution reduction programs in place to achieve a medically justified health standard.

WHEN: Friday, September 2

WHO: **Brian Urbaszewski – Director Environmental Health Programs**
Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago
Available on site or by phone

STATEMENT: We are extremely shocked and disappointed in President Obama's decision to prohibit EPA from strengthening this health standard now. There is overwhelming medical evidence that stricter protections are desperately needed, and waiting at least two more years to update the EPA ozone smog standard will cost lives. Adequate protections are necessary to protect some of the most vulnerable members of society from complications of lung disease, including hospitalization and death. Public health should not have to wait for politics.

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Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago has been a local public health leader since 1906. Today, the association addresses asthma, COPD, lung cancer, tobacco control and air quality with a comprehensive approach involving research, education and advocacy activities. For more information, visit www.lungchicago.org.