

EPA recommends significantly lower ozone standard

By Neela Banerjee and Tony Barboza, Los Angeles Times

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency staff said Friday that the nation should tighten smog rules significantly, a step that would improve air quality in California but force costly new requirements on government and industry.

The EPA staff recommendation is the final step before the rule goes to the agency's leadership and the White House. As a result of lawsuits by environmental and health groups, the agency must propose a new ozone rule by December and the final rule by October 2015.

Federal standards for ground-level ozone, the main ingredient in smog, have proved deeply contentious because they would compel many states, cities and industries to adopt new measures to cut air pollution at a cost of billions of dollars.

California would be particularly affected because much of the state does not meet the current, weaker standard for ozone that has been in place since 2008.

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