



LAWRENCE-DOUGLAS COUNTY

# Health Department

Date: May 27, 2008

To: City of Lawrence and Douglas County Commissioners

From: Donna Bell, Chair *Donna M Bell*  
Lawrence-Douglas County Health Board

RE: Air Quality Update

In March of 2008, the EPA announced that it was lowering the ozone standard from 85 ppb, to 75 ppb. This new standard will become effective in March of 2010. The Air Quality Advisory Committee met on April 9, 2008 to review the implications of this new standard. While the historical data shows that the Lawrence area was barely able to meet the new standard, KDHE believes that the EPA will probably request that the Lawrence area air quality monitor be re-installed. Should this occur, and if the data shows that the Lawrence area cannot meet the new EPA standard, KDHE will be required to implement environmental controls in an attempt to reduce local ozone emissions. These controls would likely have significant economic and economic development impacts.

Ozone is a public health concern as people with lung disease, children, older adults, and people who are active can be affected when ozone levels are unhealthy. Exposure to ozone has been linked to:

- \* airway irritation, coughing, and pain when taking a deep breath;
- \* aggravation of asthma and increased susceptibility to respiratory illnesses like pneumonia and bronchitis; and,
- \* permanent lung damage with repeated exposures.

With the new EPA standards, the issue has shifted from: "Is Douglas County contributing to air quality degradation in the Kansas City air quality non-attainment area (previous data indicated we were not)?" to "Is Douglas County exceeding the new ozone standard of 75 ppb?"

In consideration of the health and economic interests of the community, the Air Quality Advisory Committee and the Health Board believe that Lawrence and Douglas County should take proactive steps such as a public education campaign to reduce ozone emissions so that we might remain in compliance with the EPA ozone standard. The Health Department looks forward to working with you to achieve this goal.

Please contact Dan Partridge, Director, or Richard Ziesenis, Director of Environmental Health, at 843-3060 if you would like discuss this issue further.

Enclosure: Background Information on Air Quality Monitoring in Douglas County

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## Background Information on Air Quality Monitoring in Douglas County

In 2002 the Lawrence-Douglas County Health Board, at the request of the Douglas County Board of County Commissioners, formed an Air Quality Advisory Committee (AQAC). The committee's charge was to "consider air quality data and trends and recommend measures to the city and county commissions to maintain compliance with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) air quality standards." The initial committee was comprised of fifteen local professionals representing state and local public health, private industries such as Westar and Astaris, and representatives from the University of Kansas.

The initial focus of the AQAC was to identify how good (or bad) the outdoor air quality was in Lawrence and Douglas County. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) had air monitoring stations in Kansas City, but none in the Lawrence area. In May of 2002, KDHE installed a monitor north of Lawrence at the University of Kansas Field Station. This monitor primarily measured ozone concentrations, which had become a concern in the Kansas City metropolitan area.

In April of 2003, the air quality monitor was moved to the City of Lawrence municipal airport. In May of 2003, the City Commissioners and County Commissioners sent a letter to Governor Kathleen Sebelius requesting that Douglas County be excluded from the Kansas City Air Quality Non-Attainment Area. The request was granted by the Governor and the EPA.

The EPA uses a 3 year rolling average of the 4 highest seasonal readings to determine compliance with air quality standards. For the 2003 – 2005 monitoring period, the Lawrence monitor 3 year average was 73 ppb with no single reading greater than 85 ppb. During the same time period six of the Kansas City monitors exceeded the 85 ppb standard. The 2004 – 2006 monitoring period average for Lawrence was 72 ppb. After the 2006 ozone season was over, KDHE removed the Lawrence area monitor because of cost restraints and the absence of data indicating that Lawrence and Douglas County ozone levels exceeded the current 85 ppb standard.