

A!ert



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Alert is a monthly update on transportation and air quality planning activities in the Delaware Valley.



Air Quality Regulations

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Reinstates California's Authority to Regulate Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Cars and Trucks

On March 9, 2022, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reinstated California's authority under the Clean Air Act to implement its own greenhouse gas (GHG) emission standards and zero emission vehicle (ZEV) sales mandate. California has historically been granted a waiver under the Clean Air Act to enforce emissions standards for vehicles that are more stringent than the federal emissions standards due to the state's severe air pollution issues. This waiver was extended to GHG emissions in 2007 when the U.S. Supreme Court decided that the EPA could regulate GHGs as an air pollutant.

California's Clean Air Act waiver allows other states to adopt California's regulations, including sales mandates for electric vehicles. Fourteen other states including New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and New York have adopted California's ZEV regulations. The EPA's action was applauded by the ZEV states that support California's actions to reduce emissions from the transportation sector.

According to New Jersey Commissioner of Environmental Protection Shawn M. LaTourette, "We applaud the EPA for reinstating California's clean car waiver, which means New Jersey can continue developing very strong vehicle emissions standards that are protective of both public health and the environment." These sentiments echo comments from other ZEV states that are on the forefront of addressing GHG emissions.

The action is not universally popular. Sixteen other state attorney generals are challenging the EPA ruling, calling it an unconstitutional attempt by the agency to circumvent federal regulations.

The restoration of California's Clean Air Act waiver is part of a larger review of the 2019 Safer Affordable Fuel-Efficient Vehicles Rule Part One: One National Program Rule (SAFE-1). The SAFE-1 rule reversed Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards implemented under the Obama administration, claiming that stricter fuel economy requirements would lead to smaller cars, which would be more dangerous in crashes.

In 2021, the Department of Transportation proposed to revise the SAFE-1 plan to strengthen fleetwide fuel economy requirements for automakers from a 1.5 percent improvement each year through 2026 to 8 percent for model years 2024 through 2026. Automakers are expected to achieve those goals by improving gasoline-powered vehicle performance and by selling more electric vehicles.



Save the Date

Ongoing

PA DEP Level 2 EV Charging Station Rebates

For more information, please visit:

www.dep.pa.gov
and search
"Level 2 Charging Rebates"

Friday
May 13, 2022

**Deadline for Applications:
NJDEP
DC Fast Charger Community Grant Program**

For more information, please visit:

nj.gov/dep/drivegreen
and search
"DC Fast Charge Grants"

California is the largest automobile market in the United States and the tenth largest auto market in the world. Since automakers prefer to manufacture vehicles that meet one set of standards, this buying power, augmented by other states adopting the California rules, allows California to influence fuel efficiency and emissions characteristics of all new light-duty cars and trucks. Vehicles meeting the California standards meet standards for the majority of vehicles sold in the United States.

See more information on the [California's Waiver to Regulate GHG Emissions](#) on the EPA website.



Air Quality News

Recent Study Links Community Air Pollution to Historical Redlining

Researchers at the University of California at Berkeley (Berkeley) published an article in the journal *Environmental Science and Technology Letters*, which demonstrates a strong correlation between modern community exposure to air pollution and historical redlining maps used by the federal Home Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC) to grade neighborhoods for investment potential.

In the 1930s, government surveyors graded neighborhoods on a four-letter scale that ostensibly indicated how safe a neighborhood was for real estate development and investment. The presence of racial minority and immigrant populations was enough to earn the neighborhood a "D" rating, which indicated that neighborhood was an unsafe investment and are indicated by a red color on the HOLC maps. While "C" and "D" rated neighborhoods often already hosted polluting industries, these ratings also prevented home and business owners from obtaining federally insured loans and mortgages. This led to further decline that attracted land uses that were undesirable in districts with better grades.

The Berkeley study indicates that communities redlined in the 1930s still host the least desirable and most polluting industries and land uses, such as trash incinerators, cement factories, and interstate highways. The differences in exposure to air pollution between communities of color and white Americans is well documented in scientific literature. According to a *New York Times* article on the study, the differences in air pollution exposure between redlined and better-rated districts were even larger than the discrepancies documented in previous studies.

Surprisingly, the research also found that there aren't regional variations between the links to redlining and exposure to air pollution. The correlation between these two factors is consistent across the nation, north and south, east and west.

According to Joshua S. Apte, an assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering at Berkeley, the patterns he and his colleagues found were remarkably consistent across the United States. "This history of racist planning is so deeply ingrained in American cities basically of any stripe, anywhere," Dr. Apte said. "We went looking for this regional story, and it's not there."

While the Berkeley article focused on the relationship between nitrogen dioxide and fine particle pollution emissions—pollutants associated with transportation and industrial sources—and the redlining maps, it builds on a body of evidence from previous studies that links these maps to lack of green spaces, poorer health outcomes, and exposure to the urban heat island effect for the residents of these communities.

The study notes that even though redlining and discrimination in housing lending was outlawed in 1968, the impacts of these racist policies are still being felt nearly 100 years after they were first enacted. The authors also acknowledge that there is more to learn about the relationships of these maps to the impacts of recent urban revitalization and even gentrification.

An overview of the research conducted by the Berkeley team can be read on the *New York Times* [website](#).



DVRPC, 8th Floor
190 N. Independence Mall West
Philadelphia, PA 19106-1520
Phone: 215.592.1800 | Fax: 215.592.9125 | Web: www.dvrpc.org