



CLEARING THE AIR

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EPA STRENGTHENS AIR POLLUTION STANDARDS

Richard Stedman, Air Pollution Control Officer

For the first time in over a decade, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a final rule imposing tighter restrictions on fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}). PM_{2.5} is a form of pollution from fine particles in air that are 2.5 micrometers (about one ten-thousandth of an inch, approximately 30 times smaller than the width of a human hair) or less in diameter. PM_{2.5} is typically made up of organic chemicals, dust, soot, and metals. These particles can come from cars and trucks, factories, wood burning, and other activities. (continued

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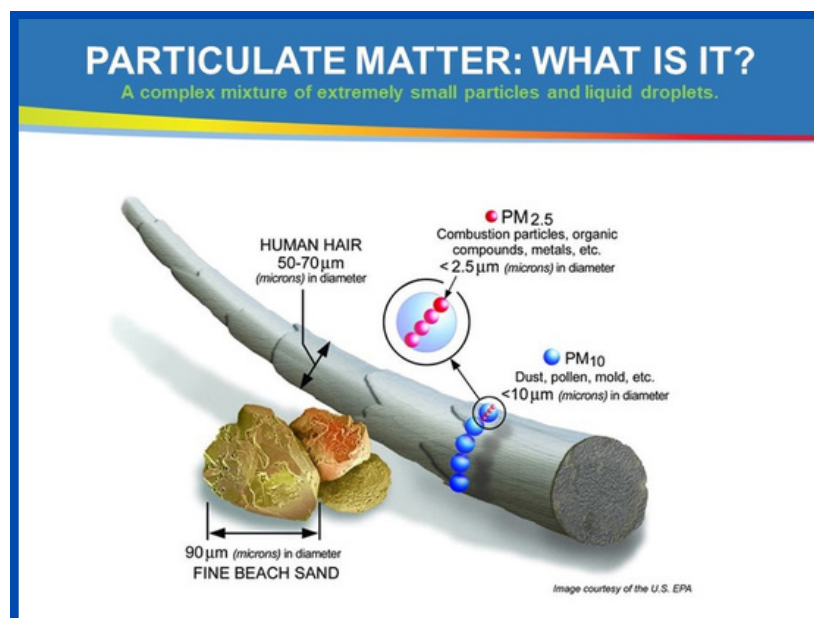
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The smaller the particles, the deeper they can move into the lungs when we breathe. Fine particle pollution has been shown to cause many serious health effects, including heart and lung disease. Exposure to PM_{2.5} contributes to deaths across California. Children, the elderly, and people suffering from heart or lung disease, asthma, or chronic illness, are most sensitive to the effects of PM_{2.5} exposure.

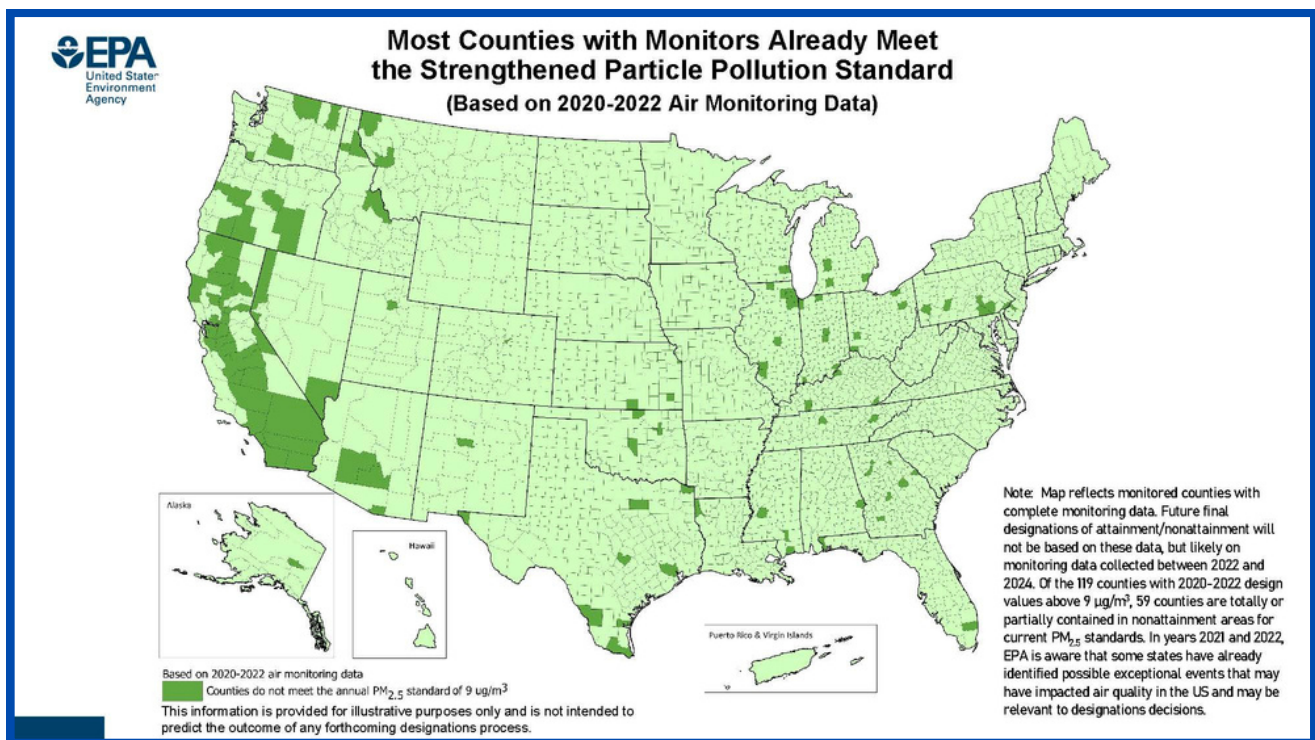
The [final rule](#), issued on Feb. 7, 2024, strengthens the nation's [National Ambient Air Quality Standards \(NAAQS\)](#) by lowering the level of the primary (health-based) annual PM_{2.5} standard from 12.0 micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) to 9.0 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. EPA, however, retained the primary 24-hour PM_{2.5} and primary 24-hour PM₁₀ (course particle) standards at 35 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ and 150 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, respectively. It also determined no changes were necessary to the secondary PM standards. Secondary standards set limits to protect public welfare, including protection against decreased visibility, and damage to animals, crops, vegetation, and buildings.



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This final rule does not make any air quality attainment/nonattainment designations. Consistent with Clean Air Act timelines, EPA is required to designate areas as attainment or nonattainment within two years of the final rule. However, most counties nationwide that have air quality monitors already meet the strengthened PM_{2.5} standard. EPA estimates that in 2032, only around 52 counties—23 in California—would not meet the new standard.

Although all three counties in MBARD's jurisdiction currently meet the new PM_{2.5} standard, EPA's new rule should further help improve air quality in our region, throughout our state, and the nation. This improved air quality will translate into less adverse public health and environmental impacts.



Richard A. Stedman

RICHARD A. STEDMAN
AIR POLLUTION CONTROL OFFICER



APPLY TO JOIN MBARD'S HEARING BOARD

Are you passionate about air quality and environmental issues? Do you want to make a difference in your community? We're looking for dedicated individuals to join the MBARD Hearing Board.

The MBARD Hearing Board currently has the following vacancies: a medical professional and a professional engineer. If you are interested in applying or want more information, see our website: <https://www.mbard.org/hearing-board>.

The Hearing Board is a quasi-judicial panel authorized to provide relief from MBARD regulations under certain circumstances. Under state law, Hearing Board members are appointed by but act independently of the MBARD Board of Directors. The Hearing Board consists of five members: a medical professional, a professional engineer, an attorney, and two members of the public. The Hearing Board is authorized to hear:

- Petitions by companies for variances;
- Petitions for abatement orders;
 - An abatement order requires a business operating out of compliance to take specific actions or to shut down its operation. This is a severe remedy normally reserved for serious violators.
- Appeals by businesses from the granting of permits, permit conditions, permit denials and suspensions, denials of emission reduction credits and denials of pollution control plans;
- Appeals by third parties.

The most common type of action heard by the MBARD Hearing Board in the past five years is a variance. A variance is an administrative exception to a law allowing a business to continue operating in violation of MBARD rules without penalty while it takes appropriate steps to meet air pollution control requirements. Variances can be granted only by the Hearing Board, not by MBARD inspectors or engineers.



ARE YOU SMOKE READY?

The typical wildfire season will soon be upon us. Whether the smoke is from local impacts or from large wildfires from across the state, country or internationally... is your home smoke ready?

Wildfire smoke contains many air pollutants, including particulate matter, carbon monoxide, and ozone that are known to cause health issues. Particulate matter can trigger respiratory problems and asthma. Those most at risk include young children, older adults, pregnant women, people who work outside, and people with chronic respiratory and heart conditions. Recent studies indicate that exposure to wildfire smoke may increase the risk of dementia.

Here are some proactive actions to consider before a wildfire event:

- Check the integrity of windows and doors and replace any sealing elements as needed. Good sealing elements will help minimize smoke impacts inside the home when windows and doors are closed during a wildfire smoke event.
- Look into purchasing an air filtration device for your home. Be sure to look at the devices' Clean Air Delivery Rate (two or more air changes per hour is ideal) with filters containing MERV13 or higher ratings. Avoid filtration devices that use ion/electrons filaments since these devices can produce ozone pollution.
- Learn how to use the indoor re-circulate function on your home Heating and Ventilation Unit (HVAC). The use of this function may be helpful in reducing smoke from entering the home, as most central air conditioners are designed by default to re-circulate indoor air.
- Replace your HVAC air filter with a high-efficiency particulate filter (HEPA) or MERV13 or higher air filters that can capture fine particles – consult with a HVAC professional about what type of filter is best for your system.



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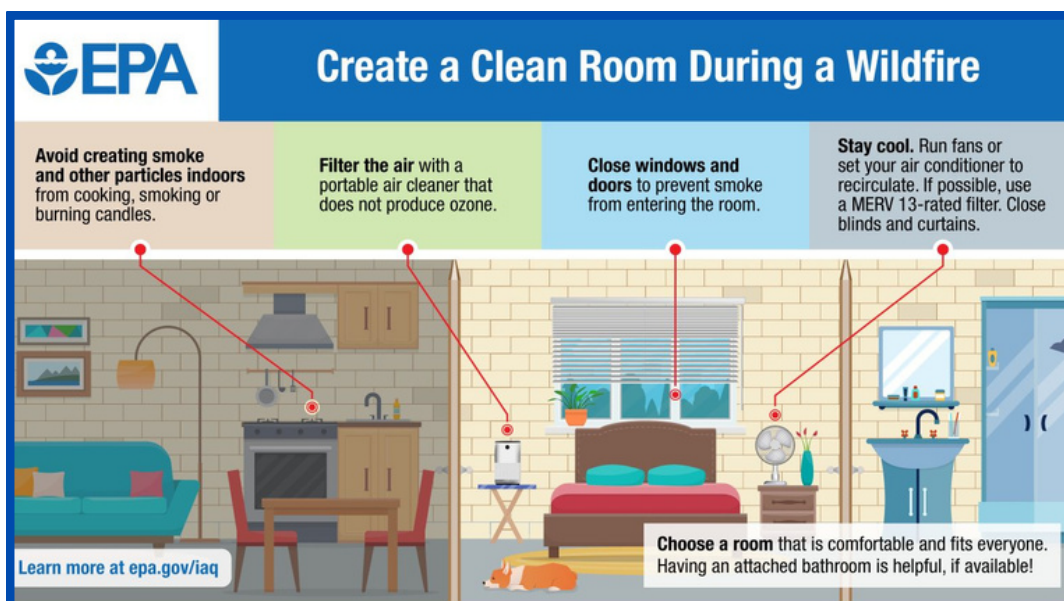
- Have a supply of N95 masks stocked. People who must be outdoors for long periods-, in areas with heavy smoke may want to wear an N95 respirator mask. N95 masks require a perfect seal to be effective. If the mask is not fitted correctly, it will provide little if any protection. (Note: **N95 respirator masks are not intended for children.** Wearing a mask may cause breathing difficulties and can be dangerous for individuals with lung and heart conditions. If you have a chronic health condition, consult your healthcare provider before wearing an N95 mask.)

How to Know

You can see air quality nationwide for fine particulate matter (PM2.5) at the [AirNow Fire and Smoke Map](#). Locally, MBARD has a wildfire smoke sensor network that measures fine particulate matter coming from wildfire smoke: [Current Air Quality & Forecast - Monterey Bay Air Resources District \(mbard.org\)](#).

Please check the [MBARD Wildfire Smoke Information webpage](#) for a map of the sensor network and for more information on how to protect yourself from wildfire smoke.

Learn more about how to be smoke-ready at: [Smoke-Ready Toolbox for Wildfires | US EPA](#).



OUR AIR IN REVIEW: 2023 INTO 2024

In 2023, the overall air quality in the North Central Coast Air Basin (NCCAB) can be categorized as “Good” according to the federal Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Air Quality Index (AQI). MBARD continues to be in attainment for the federal and state ozone and PM2.5 ambient air quality standards, and the federal PM10 standard, but in non-attainment for the state 24-hour PM10 standard.

The American Lung Association’s State of the Air report is expected to give Monterey and Santa Cruz counties an “A” grade for ozone and a “C” grade for San Benito County. It is likely that all three counties will receive an “F” grade for particulate matter concentrations. However, these grades typically include wildfire smoke impacts which are considered “exceptional events”. Wildfire smoke is known to elevate the presence of particulate matter and ozone levels.

Exceptional events are unusual or naturally occurring episodes that can affect air quality but are not reasonably controllable or preventable and are unlikely to be replicated at a particular location, such as a wildfire. Additionally, exceedances of air quality standards caused by exceptional events may be excluded from attainment/non-attainment pollution thresholds at the discretion of EPA.

Geography and meteorological conditions are major factors with air quality in the NCCAB. Impacts from windblown dust from prevailing winds and various soil disturbance activities, as those found in agricultural operations, may keep MBARD in non-attainment status with the state 24-hour PM10 standard in 2024. Other anticipated future impacts are wildfire smoke and smoke from home heating and open burning.

Moving into 2024, MBARD will strive to continue to monitor, assess, advise, and report air pollution concentrations to help inform and maintain public access to air monitoring data in the jurisdiction.

For access to current and various MBARD air monitoring data, wildfire smoke and other useful information, please access the MBARD air monitoring webpage: [Current Air Quality & Forecast - Monterey Bay Air Resources District \(mbard.org\)](https://www.mbard.org/Current-Air-Quality-Forecast-Monterey-Bay-Air-Resources-District)



PERMIT AND COMPLIANCE ADVISORY: WHAT IS PCBTF?

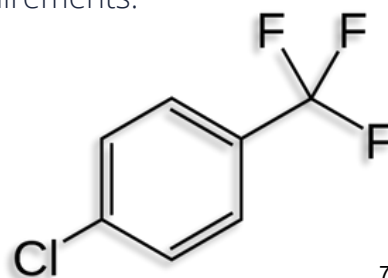
PCBTF, also called p-Chlorobenzotrifluoride (Chemical Abstracts Service # 98-56-6), is a compound identified as an exempt volatile organic compound (VOC) by federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). As such, PCBTF is now found in many coatings and other products because its VOC-exempt status allows those coatings to meet stringent, low-VOC requirements. Many industries use products containing PCBTF, including automotive coating and refinishing, metal and wood coating operations, and printing operations.

The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) classified this compound as a carcinogen and in August 2020 adopted a cancer inhalation unit risk factor for PCBTF. This determination by OEHHA now triggers MBARD to include products containing PCBTF as part of risk review for permits and will require facilities to report their usage.

Based on initial evaluations of the amount of PCBTF in coating products and volume of coatings used, MBARD is finding coating usage at existing facilities is resulting in elevated cancer risk under [MBARD Rule 1000](#). This rule establishes permit guidelines and requirements for sources emitting air toxics. If MBARD's permit evaluation results in elevated cancer risk, the following options are available to permit holders:

1. Add permit conditions to limit the use of coatings containing PCBTF. For example, a limit on the gallons of PCBTF coatings used per year and the requirement to record specific information for PCBTF containing coatings such as volume used, % PCBTF content, and VOC content.
2. Change to use coatings which do not contain PCBTF.

Additionally, autobody repair and coating operations will be required criteria and toxic pollutant emissions to the California Air Resources Board beginning in 2027 for coatings applied in calendar year 2026. MBARD plans to assist permit holders which will require more robust record keeping to comply with the reporting requirements.



PROPOSED FEE RULES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025

MBARD is proposing revisions to three fee rules as a component of the draft Fiscal Year 2024-2025 budget. MBARD is considering a fee increase of 2.6% consistent with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the San Francisco Area. To account for the potential fee increase and to make administrative clarifications, MBARD is proposing to revise the following rules:

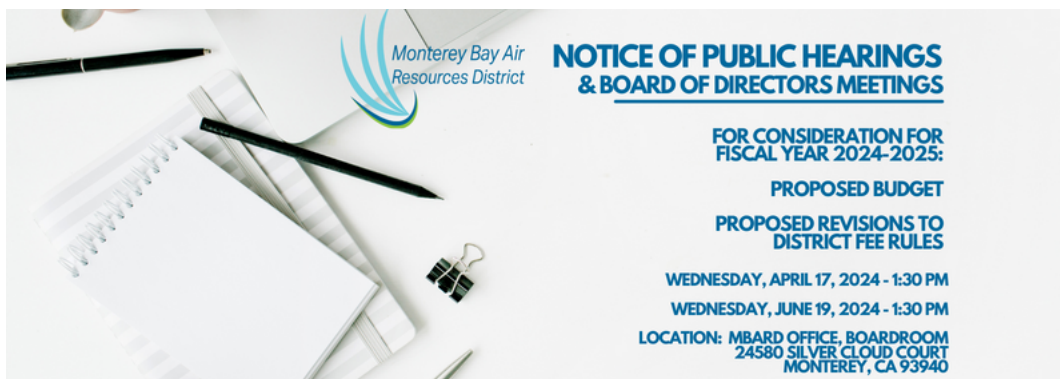
- Rule 300: Fees
- Rule 301: Fee Schedules
- Rule 306: Asbestos NESHAP Fees [NESHAP = National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants]

MBARD requests public input on these fee rule revisions. The proposed fee rule revisions are available to review online: <https://www.mbard.org/3-22-2024-proposed-revisions-to-fee-rules-for-fiscal-year-2024-2025>. If approved, the fee increase will become effective on July 1, 2024.

The MBARD Board of Directors will be hold two hearings, available in-person and via Zoom, on the following dates:

- April 17, 2024; 1:30 PM; Monterey Bay Air Resources District, Board Room, 3rd Floor, 24580 Silver Cloud Court, Monterey
- June 19, 2024; 1:30 PM; Monterey Bay Air Resources District, Board Room, 3rd Floor, 24580 Silver Cloud Court, Monterey

Written comments can be emailed to aclymo@mbard.org or mailed to: MBARD, Amy Clymo, 24580 Silver Cloud Court, Monterey, CA 93940 by June 7, 2024.



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHTS

Welcome Our New Staff



Michael Purugganan
Air Quality Technician

Michael Purugganan started working as an Air Quality Technician for the Planning Division in September 2023. Michael relocated from San Diego, where he previously worked at Diazyme Laboratories Inc. as a production scientist for the manufacturing of medical testing kits. Michael just purchased an electric vehicle, a Chevy Bolt, and he loves it!



Travis Nelson
Air Quality Specialist

Travis Nelson began working for MBARD as an Air Quality Specialist in January 2024 for the Air Monitoring Division. Travis most recently worked as a Service Desk Agent for the Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula (CHOMP). Other past work experience consists of working in the law and bank industries. Travis recently became a first-time father to a son! Congratulations Travis!



VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR GRANTS & INCENTIVES:

[HTTPS://WWW.MBARD.ORG/GRANTS-INCENTIVES](https://www.mbard.org/grants-incentives)

- SERVING MONTEREY, SAN BENITO & SANTA CRUZ COUNTIES
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Mary Adams Supervisor, District 5 - Monterey County	Monterey County
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Mary Ann Carbone Mayor, Sand City Budget Committee Member	Monterey Peninsula Cities
Zach Friend Supervisor, District 2 - Santa Cruz County	Santa Cruz County
Felipe Hernandez Supervisor, District 4 - Santa Cruz County Alternate Budget Committee Member	Santa Cruz County
Mike LeBarre Mayor, City of King City Budget Committee Member	South Monterey County Cities
Orlando Osornio Councilmember, City of Salinas	City of Salinas
Rick Perez Councilmember, City of Hollister	City of Hollister

Richard A. Stedman, Air Pollution Control Officer