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Fitzgerald, Health Department Announce Historic First for Allegheny County
Every Monitoring Site Meets PM2.5 Air Quality Standards

PITTSBURGH – Allegheny County Executive Rich Fitzgerald and the Allegheny County Health Department today reported that last year, for the first, time every air monitoring site in the County met all federal standards for fine particulate pollution (PM2.5).

“We are very proud of this milestone and I commend the Health Department and the Board of Health for their diligence in continuing to work towards better air quality for our county,” said County Executive Fitzgerald. “Working cooperatively, we can continue to improve our region’s environment by taking advantage of opportunities provided by our partners in the foundation community, business community and environmental community.”

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency sets standards for “criteria” pollutants that look at the impact of pollution levels on public health. The annual standard for PM2.5 is 12 micrograms per cubic meter, set in 2012. It tightened the previous 2006 annual standard of 15. The 24-hour standard is 35, set in 2006.

“This is a significant milestone for Allegheny County, especially at the Liberty air monitoring site, which historically has had the highest pollution levels in the County and was the only monitoring location until now not to meet all federal standards for fine particulate pollution,” said Health Director Dr. Karen Hacker. “It marks a huge leap forward in our efforts to improve air quality. While our work is far from finished, we are proud to say that air quality in Allegheny County is the best it’s been since the industrial revolution.”

All of the Health Department’s air monitoring sites met both standards in 2013. The annual average was 12 and the 24-hour average 31.1 at the Liberty site and lower concentrations were measured at seven other sites in Avalon, Clairton, North Braddock, Harrison, Lawrenceville, North Park and South Fayette.

Three consecutive years of monitoring data at or below the PM2.5 limits are required for an area to be declared in “attainment” of federal air quality standards. All of the monitoring sites are already in attainment of the PM2.5 standards, except Liberty. And with a continued downward trend expected in PM2.5 levels, Liberty is now on its way to attainment well ahead of a 2020 deadline mandated by EPA.

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