July 31, 2007

Contact: Joe Blubaugh, 785-296-5795
jblubaugh@kdhe.state.ks.us

Kansas Plan for Minimizing Ozone in Kansas City Area Approved by EPA

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has formally approved plans to keep Kansas City air clean by limiting ozone-forming emissions. The states of Kansas and Missouri submitted the plans to the EPA in May.

"We are greatly pleased to learn that these plans have been given the go-ahead by the EPA," said Roderick L. Bremby, Secretary of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). "We can now take the steps necessary to more fully protect the public health and environment in the Kansas City area."

Bremby said that those steps would include KDHE drafting regulations to limit Kansas power plant emissions and engine idling of commercial diesel vehicles in the Kansas City metro area. The new rules, when proposed, will be subject to public review and comment. Other measures include voluntary programs to reduce emissions and local plans to educate residents about things they can do to curb air pollution.

Initial measures of Kansas' plan call for:

- **Reduction in nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions from sources larger than 1,000 tons of annual emissions in Wyandotte and Johnson Counties.** This would be accomplished through either NOx Reasonable Available Control Technology (RACT) rules or signed agreements with the affected sources.

- **Diesel idle reduction in Wyandotte and Johnson Counties through administrative regulations or local ordinances,** which would affect commercial heavy-duty diesel vehicles, and restrict how long these types of vehicles could idle before having to turn off their engines. There will be exemptions allowed for items such as emergency vehicles, traffic jams and maintenance requirements.

Additional controls on ozone-forming emissions could be considered if environmental officials determine they are needed in order to maintain air quality.

On June 19, KDHE announced that an ozone monitor in northern Kansas City, Mo. had registered eight-hour average ozone concentrations exceeding the EPA standard. By exceeding the standard, the Greater Kansas City area could potentially be placed into the EPA regulatory category of "non-attainment." Communities in this category are required by federal rules to adopt more stringent measures to control ozone emissions.

Ground-level ozone, also referred to as smog, is a man-made pollutant formed from a chemical reaction between nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds in the presence of sunlight. More than half of all ozone-forming pollutants are caused by everyday actions, such as driving, painting, refueling, and using gas-powered lawn and garden equipment. Prolonged

exposure to ground-level ozone can cause irritation to the eyes, nose and lungs leading to inflammation, chest pains and difficulty breathing.

Kansans can help reduce ground-level ozone by following these simple tips:

- Use mass transit where available, or carpool, bike or walk to work, school or on errands. During ozone alert days, take special care if you have breathing problems.

- Keep your car or truck properly maintained and see a repair technician if your "check engine" light is on.

- Refuel after 7 p.m., and don't top off your gas tank. This reduces vapor loss (and saves money) during refueling.

- Use an electric or push lawn mower. Avoid using gasoline-powered yard machines.

- Avoid lighter fluid when barbecuing. Use a chimney or electric starter to light your coals.

- Become more energy efficient. Use compact fluorescent light bulbs and turn the air conditioner up a few degrees.