DEQâ€™s Pendleton Workshop on the New EPA Air Quality Standard Draws an Array of Participants from

by Bend Weekly News Sources

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) hosted a workshop in Pendleton on Dec. 15th to explain the new national Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) air quality standards for fine particulate matter and their possible impact on many Eastern Oregon communities. The event attracted county commissioners, city managers, local regulatory specialists, agricultural and forestry interests and fire marshals from ten counties in Central and Eastern Oregon and two Tribal Governments.

â€œWe are, indeed, pleased with the broad degree of interest represented by those present at the workshop,â€• said DEQ Eastern Region Air Quality Manager Linda Hayes-Gorman. â€œIt means many communities want to be proactive to meet this more protective 24-hour fine particulate standard.â€•

EPA reduced the 24-hour fine particulate matter standard by nearly half the acceptable health thresholds addressing smoke, soot and dust particles measuring less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM2.5). This means certain communities may potentially violate the new standard, especially those that have historically had problems with particulate matter. The strict standard took effect Dec. 18.

Consequently, EPA intends to further protect vulnerable individuals from air pollution in communities across the United States, particularly from local sources of smoke. The most vulnerable individuals are children, the elderly and those with respiratory and heart conditions. It will be up to cities and counties to address the impacts to their individual communities. DEQ plan to work with each community interested in developing strategies to reduce particulate pollution. Communities interested in further strategy development can contact Larry Calkins at 541-567-8297, extension 25.

Presentations at the workshop included a review of the revised PM2.5 standard, air monitoring rules, interpreting air monitoring data and community actions already in place in La Grande, Pendleton, Lakeview, Klamath Falls, Joseph and Wasco County as well as heat and burn â€œsmartâ€• concepts.

Additionally, the National Weather Service at Pendleton offered an overview of meteorology relating to inversions and PM2.5. Smoke and weather forecasting, using newly developed internet tools, was provided by

the Puget Sound Clean Air Authority.

Communities were strongly encouraged to design their own programs and develop the right suite of choices for local acceptance.

â€œThe major focus should be on residential home heating, the biggest trigger for violations, said Mike Gilroy with the Puget Sound Clean Air Authority, who added that programs predicated on a health-based framework, like that in greater Seattle area, have proven to be popular and effective.

Presentations offered at the Pendleton workshop are available in their entirety on the DEQ website at: http://www.deq.state.or.us/aq/planning/pm25.htm