

Appeals court tells EPA to reconsider soot standards

Feb. 25 -- A federal appeals court has handed another defeat to the Bush administration's Environmental Protection Agency.

The U.S. District Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia on Feb. 24 told the new Obama-administration EPA leadership to reconsider fine particle pollution -- or soot -- air standards the agency established in 2006.

Then EPA Administrator Stephen Johnson concluded more than two years ago that the agency should maintain an existing 15 micrograms per cubic meter standard for fine particle pollution even though the agency's own staff had recommended lowering the standard by one to two micrograms per cubic meter.

The D.C.-based federal appeals court concluded in its ruling that the EPA had failed to adequately explain why an annual level of 15 parts per cubic meter would protect the public health with an "adequate margin of safety."

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