

## **Libby, Mont., meets federal air quality standard**

### ***Recent data shows air quality improvement in Libby***

(Denver, Colo. – October 8, 2009) Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer was notified today of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's decision to designate Libby, Mont., as an attainment area. Based on recent air quality data, the Libby area is meeting the revised 24-hour fine particle (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) air quality standard.

EPA sent letters to Governors and Tribal leaders in August 2008 outlining the areas that did not meet the federal health-based fine particle air quality standard and invited comments for consideration. EPA evaluated the comments and additional data submitted before making these final decisions.

In December 2008, after closely reviewing recommendations from states and tribes along with public comments, EPA identified attainment and nonattainment areas based on air quality monitoring data from 2005 through 2007. The December 2008 designations were never published in the Federal Register and have been under review. Because the 2008 air quality data is the most recent, EPA used this data to make final designations.

The Libby area of Montana was violating the 24-hour PM<sub>2.5</sub> federal standard according to state-validated air quality monitoring data for the previous three years, 2005 thru 2007. The data for the most recent three years (2006, 2007 and 2008) showed that the area was meeting the standard.

"This is good news for the Libby citizens who have worked hard to reduce emissions of PM<sub>2.5</sub>" said Carol Rushin, Region 8's Acting Regional Administrator. "The measures that have been taken to control PM<sub>2.5</sub> have brought cleaner air to Libby."

PM<sub>2.5</sub> -- approximately 1/30th the size of an average human hair -- can aggravate heart and lung diseases and has been associated with a variety of serious health problems including heart attacks, chronic bronchitis and asthma. Sources of PM<sub>2.5</sub> include fuel combustion from wood burning, gasoline automobiles, diesel-powered vehicles such as trucks and busses, power plants and industrial processes. In September 2006, EPA dramatically strengthened the fine particle standards to protect public health, tightening the 24-hour standard from 65 to 35 micrograms per cubic meter.

For additional technical information, please visit [www.epa.gov/pmdesignations](http://www.epa.gov/pmdesignations)