

Board Proposes “Identical-in-Substance” Amendments to Ambient Air Quality Standards

On January 8, 2026, the Board proposed amendments to keep Illinois’ ambient air quality standards (35 Ill. Adm. Code 243) identical in substance to the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The amendments reflect three actions taken by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) during the 18-month period of July 1, 2024 through December 31, 2025.

- First, on December 27, 2024, USEPA revised the existing secondary sulfur dioxide (SO₂) standard to an annual average, averaged over three consecutive years, with a level of 10 parts per billion (ppb). USEPA also revised data handling requirements for the secondary SO₂ NAAQS.
- Second, on April 7, 2025, USEPA designated two new Federal Equivalent Methods (FEMs) for measuring pollutant concentrations in ambient air, one for fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) and the other for coarse particulate matter (PM_{10-2.5}).
- Third, and finally, on September 5, 2025, USEPA designated one new FEM for SO₂, one new FEM for PM_{2.5}, one new FEM for PM_{10-2.5}, and one new reference method for measuring nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) concentrations in ambient air.

Publication of the Board’s proposed amendments in the *Illinois Register* will start a period of at least 45 days during which anyone may file a public comment with the Board. The Board will also hold a public hearing on March 5, 2026, and expects to adopt final amendments later that month.

The Board’s rulemaking is captioned National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), USEPA Amendments (July 1, 2024 through December 31, 2025), dockets R25-15, R26-7, R26-15 (consol.). Here are links to the Board’s (1) [opinion and order](#) and (2) [addendum](#), which includes the text of the proposed amendments. For more information, please contact Joan Beacom at 312-814-6924 or joan.beacom2@illinois.gov.