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**EPA’s strengthens soot rule; nurses highlight that more work remains**

[Washington, D.C] - On February 7, 2024, EPA released their [final rule](#) for particulate matter, otherwise known as “soot.” Soot is a health-harming pollutant that is produced by power plants, tailpipes on cars and trucks, and other industrial sources. Soot poses elevated health risks for children, seniors, and people with chronic illness and an estimated [85,000-200,000](#) deaths are caused each year by this deadly pollution. With this update, EPA is strengthening the standard for soot pollution from a level of 12 micrograms per cubic meter to 9 micrograms per cubic meter.

In response to the announcement of the proposed rule, the Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments Executive Director Katie Huffling, DNP, RN, CNM, FAAN issued the following statement:

“Nurses welcome today’s updated rule from EPA on particulate matter as an important public health safeguard against dangerous air pollution. EPA’s proposed stronger soot standard, released today, will prevent 4,500 premature deaths and 2,000 emergency room visits and yield up to \$46 billion in net health benefits in 2032.

“Studies show that people of color are disproportionately exposed to and harmed by soot pollution. Strengthening the standard is critical to protecting the health of those most impacted by particle pollution, especially for those near polluting sources and those disproportionately exposed to increased levels of particulate matter. [Asian](#), [Hispanic](#), and [Black individuals](#) are at a higher risk of death from exposure to soot. Exposure to, and inhalation of, soot leads to increased mortality rates, hospitalizations, and visits to the ER. Soot is also linked to grave illnesses and health risks including [diabetes](#), [cancer](#), [kidney disease](#), asthma attacks, heart attacks, stroke, heart disease, COPD, Parkinson’s disease, dementia, low birth weight, greater risk of preterm birth, higher rates of overall mortality, and possibly adverse [pregnancy outcomes](#).

“While we celebrate this proposal as a critical step forward, this final proposal leaves the soot 24-hour standard unchanged which will continue to limit the EPA’s ability to address and limit spikes in soot pollution. Nurses and health advocates will continue to advocate for the strongest possible soot standards which are consistent with what the science calls for.”

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The Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments is the only national nursing organization focused solely on the intersection of health and the environment. The mission of the Alliance is to promote healthy people and healthy environments by educating and leading the nursing profession, advancing research, incorporating evidence-based practice, and influencing policy.

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