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New Air Quality Management System

Purpose

This document briefly outlines the new Air Quality Management System (AQMS) that is being implemented across Canada, and focuses on one of its key elements -- air zone management.

What is the AQMS?

The AQMS is a new comprehensive air management system that is designed to better protect human health and the environment. It does this through:

- New [Canadian Ambient Air Quality Standards](#) (CAAQS) to drive improvements in air quality,
- New Base-Level Industrial Emission Requirements (BLIERS) for major industries to set a consistent level of good performance across Canada,
- Air zone management that supports actions to improve air quality and keep clean areas clean,
- Enhanced coordination where air pollution crosses jurisdictional borders, and
- Increased collaboration on actions to reduce transportation emissions

What is air zone management?

Under the AQMS, air zones are the basis for monitoring, reporting and taking action on air

quality. Air zones are areas that typically exhibit similar air quality characteristics, issues and trends. It is the responsibility of each province and territory to delineate and manage their air zones based on local conditions. The level of response is proportional to the level of air quality degradation, with guidance on appropriate actions described in the [Air Zone Management Framework](#).

What are B.C.'s air zones?

B.C. has been delineated into a total of seven air zones, as shown in Figure 1. These include the Georgia Strait, Coastal, Lower Fraser Valley, Southern Interior, Central Interior, Northwest, and Northeast Air Zones.



Figure 1. New AQMS air zones in B.C.

How will air zone management affect existing local airshed plans?

Local air management plans have already been developed for a number of areas in the province. To avoid duplication of effort, air zone management plans in B.C. will be built upon existing local air management plans.

Where the CAAQS are being approached or exceeded, additional work may be required to ensure that good air quality is achieved. In such cases, the Ministry of Environment will work with affected stakeholders, including local air management committees, to develop the appropriate actions given local conditions.

How will the public be informed?

In late 2014, the province will begin annual reporting on air quality and the actions being taken to reduce air emissions. This information will be made available on the ministry's BCairquality.ca website.

How will air zone management affect industry?

Stakeholders will continue to be engaged at the local level rather than the air zone level. The BLIERS are still under development for a number of sectors. As these are finalized, they will be published in the Canada Gazette Part 1. Similar to current practices, where local air quality levels exceed national standards, the Ministry will work with stakeholders to develop the appropriate response.

What are key dates and activities for air zone management in B.C.?

2014:

- Air zone management levels assigned to each air zone, as an element of first air zone reports
- First annual air zone reports produced

2015:

- CAAQS for PM_{2.5} and ozone come into effect
- Air zone management plans developed based on management levels assigned in 2014
- Work begins on updating or developing local air management plans for areas where CAAQS are exceeded

2016:

- First national State of the Air Report produced in 2016 and every five years thereafter

Final note

This information is provided for the convenience of the reader and may change in the future. The Ministry of Environment should be consulted for complete information.

Ministry Contact

For more information, consult our website at: www.bcairquality.ca/ or e-mail the Ministry at: BCAirQuality@gov.bc. Additional details on the AQMS may be found on the website of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME).