



Walter Wright, Jr.
wwright@mwlaw.com
(501) 688.8839

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Inspector General Report Addresses Whether Certain State, Local and Tribal Data Processing Practices Could Impact Suitability for 8- hour Ozone Air Quality Determinations

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The United States Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) Office of Inspector General (“OIG”) issued a February 6th “Management Alert” (“Alert”) titled:

Certain State, Local and Tribal Data Processing Practices Could Impact Suitability of Data for 8-hour Ozone Air Quality Determinations

See 17-P-0106.

OIG states there is a risk that multiple air-monitoring agencies are not always implementing the agency’s recommended quality assurance practices for ozone data.

The review was undertaken because in the process of evaluating whether selected ozone air-monitoring data meets the criteria established by the federal agency two state monitoring agencies not using EPA-recommended data processing practices were identified. Air-monitoring data received from Georgia and South Carolina were identified as not always being processed according to recommended practices in the agency’s 2013 Quality Assurance Handbook for Air Pollution Management Systems.

Both states are stated to have adjusted ozone data based on the results of quality control checks known as “zero checks” before reporting the data to the agency’s Air Quality System (“AQS”). The OIG report states that the Quality Assurance Handbook provides:

. . . zero check adjustments, although an accepted practice under certain conditions, should not be necessary and may lead to more data quality uncertainty.

2012-2014 ozone data is stated to have been utilized to determine that

“about 26 percent of the hourly data reported in real time were different than corresponding data reported to the AQS.”

This information is deemed to constitute a risk that other air-monitoring agencies are improperly adjusting their data before reporting it to AQS. Such adjustments are stated to potentially impact the

quality of data the agency plans to use to determine whether ozone levels present an adverse health risk to the public.

OIG states:

. . .pending completion of our ongoing work, we are making no recommendations. We are alerting the EPA to a potential risk in the use of ozone data for its designations in 2017, so that the agency can take steps to further assess and mitigate risks as needed. The agency has initiated actions to assess these risks.

[A copy of the OIG report can be downloaded here.](#)