



# MEDIA RELEASE

KNOX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## EPA declares Knox County in attainment for fine particular matter

*Knoxville, Tenn.* – The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced recently that Knox County has been designated in attainment for two important National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS): the 1997 annual particulate matter (PM) 2.5 criteria and the 2006 24-hour PM 2.5 criteria. The annual designation is effective immediately; the 24-hour or daily designation is effective Sept. 27, 2017. The designation area, which includes Anderson, Blount, Knox and Loudon Counties, and a portion of Roane County, met the standards in December 2015 but was awaiting official EPA designation.

“I’m proud of our Knox County staff and all the local leaders who have worked to improve air quality in East Tennessee and make attainment a reality,” said Knox County Mayor Tim Burchett. “Clean air is not only good for the environment, but it’s an important factor in encouraging new businesses and industries to come to our region.”

This designation is based on quality-assured, certified air quality data collected from 2013 to 2015 by Knox County Air Quality Management and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation. Studies have shown fine particulates, which are 2.5 micrometers in diameter or smaller than the diameter of a human hair, can be a significant public health problem. Because of their small size, fine particulates can be inhaled into the deepest recesses of the lungs. People with heart or lung diseases, older adults and children are most likely to be affected by particle pollution exposure. Particle pollution exposure has been connected to a variety of health issues, including irritation of the eyes, nose and throat; coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath; reduced lung function; irregular heartbeat; asthma attacks; heart attacks; and premature death in people with heart or lung disease. Fine particulates are generated by motor vehicles, power plants, residential wood burning, forest fires and some industrial processes.

“While our air quality has improved greatly over the past two decades, this official designation is a culmination of the combined efforts of local governments, TDEC, EPA, industry and the citizens in our region to improve our air quality where we work, live and play,” said Knox County Air Quality Management Director Lynne Liddington. “The Knoxville area is now in attainment for all federal air quality standards measured in this area.”

The primary responsibility of Knox County’s Air Quality Management Division is to achieve and maintain the National Ambient Air Quality Standards in Knox County for all criteria pollutants designed to protect health and welfare. This is accomplished through several activities including the continuous monitoring of the ambient air; issuance of air quality health alerts; permitting of industrial air contaminant sources. The department also performs compliance and complaint investigations, issues residential open burning permits, and provides technical and educational services.

### About Knox County Health Department:

The Knox County Health Department (KCHD) is a governmental agency dedicated to making every person a healthy person. As the first health department in Tennessee to achieve national accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board, KCHD’s mission is to encourage, promote and assure the development of an active, healthy community through innovative public health practices. The organization conducts disease surveillance, prevention and control; emergency preparedness; nutrition and physical activity promotion; tobacco use prevention; health equity promotion; immunizations; and much more. For more information, visit [www.knoxcounty.org/health](http://www.knoxcounty.org/health).

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