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# CHINA: AIR QUALITY STANDARDS

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## OVERVIEW

China's Air Quality Standards not only include different timelines for certain metropolitan areas (in order to address areas where pollution is a more pressing issue) but also divides standards into classes: Class 1 applies to special regions (including national parks) and Class 2 applies to all other areas. Nationwide implementation of the current standard (see below) was completed in 2016.

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### Standard type

Ambient air quality standard

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### Regulating Body

[Ministry of Environmental Protection](#)

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### Current Standard

[GB 3095-2012](#), phased-in 2012-2016

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## HISTORY

Ambient air quality has been regulated in China since 1982, when initial limits were set for TSP (Total Suspended Particulates), SO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>2</sub>, lead, and BaP (Benzo(a)pyrene). In 1996, the standard was both strengthened and expanded from 1982 levels under National Standard [GB 3095-1996](#). In 2000, the standard was updated with less stringent limits for certain pollutants ([MEP Announcement \[2000\] No. 1](#)). In February 2012, China released a new ambient air quality standard, [GB 3095-2012](#), which sets limits for the first time on PM<sub>2.5</sub>. The new standards took effect nationwide in 2016, but many cities and regions in China were required to implement the standards earlier than the national timeline, as follows:

- 2012: Key cities including cities in Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei, Yangtze River Delta, and Pearl River Delta regions, and provincial capitals
- 2013: Key environmental protection cities
- 2015: All prefecture-level cities
- 2016: Nationwide implementation

In parallel with GB 3095-2012, a new Air Quality Index (AQI) definition was also released. The new AQI, which for the first time includes both PM<sub>2.5</sub> and ozone, is specified in [HJ 633-2012](#). It replaces the old Air Pollution Index, API. In September 2013, the State Council issued the "[Air Pollution Prevention and Control Action Plan](#)," which mandates 15-25% PM<sub>2.5</sub> reductions in key cities and 10% PM<sub>10</sub> reductions in all other cities by 2017 vs. a 2012 baseline.

## TECHNICAL STANDARDS

China's current air quality standards include two classes of limit values. Class 1 standards apply to special regions such as national parks. Class 2 standards apply to all other areas, including urban and industrial areas. Earlier versions of the standard included a third class – special industrial areas – but this class was eliminated in the 2012 standard.

### GB 3095-2012

The following table presents the current ambient air quality standards in China, as specified in [GB 3095-2012](#). These standards were phased-in beginning in 2012 for some cities and by 2016 for all cities nationwide. Again, the Class 2 standards apply to urban areas.

**Primary standards**

Pollutant	Averaging time	Limit		Unit
		Class 1	Class 2	
SO <sub>2</sub>	annual	20	60	µg/m <sup>3</sup>
	24 hours	50	150	
	hourly	150	500	
NO <sub>2</sub>	annual	40	40	
	24 hours	80	80	
	hourly	200	200	
CO	24 hours	4	4	mg/m <sup>3</sup>
	hourly	10	10	
O <sub>3</sub>	daily, 8-hour maximum	100	160	µg/m <sup>3</sup>
	hourly	160	200	
PM <sub>10</sub>	annual	40	70	
	24 hours	50	150	
PM <sub>2.5</sub>	annual	15	35	
	24 hours	35	75	

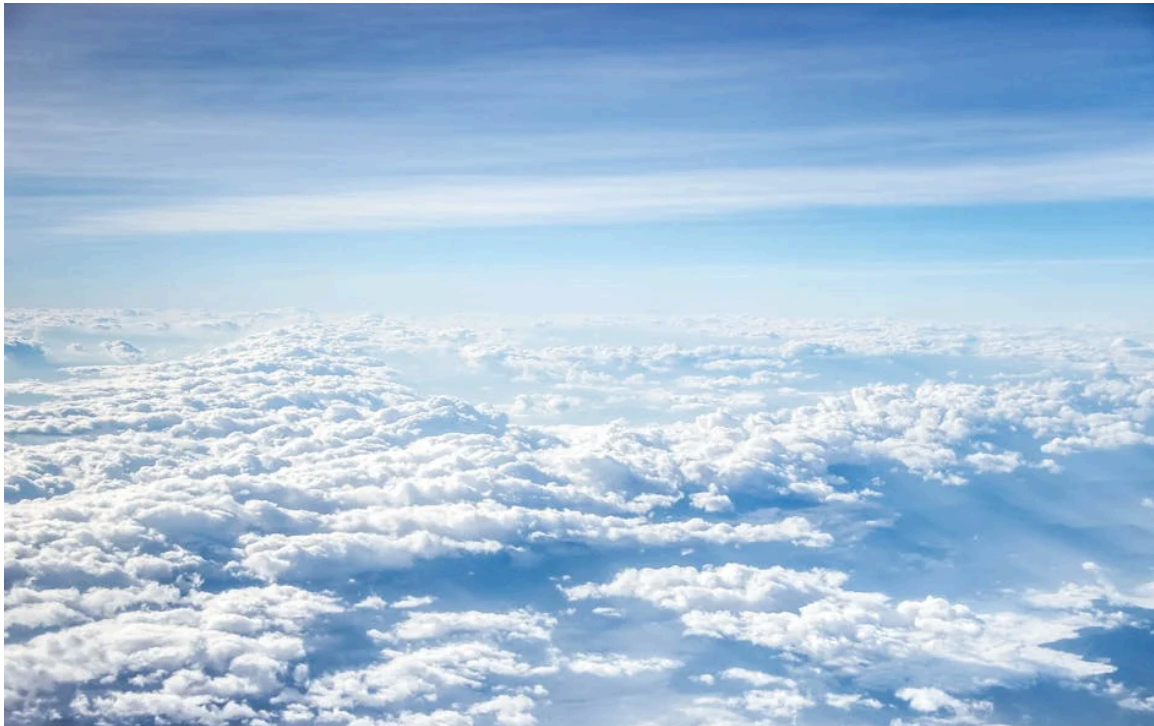
Additional standards

Pollutant	Averaging time	Limit		Unit
		Class 1	Class 2	
Total Suspended Particles (TSP)	annual	80	200	µg/m³
	24 hours	120	30	
NO <sub>x</sub>	annual	50	50	
	24 hours	100	100	
	hourly	250	250	
Lead (Pb)	annual	0.5	0.5	
	seasonal	1	1	
Benzopyrene (BaP)	annual	0.001	0.001	
	24 hours	0.0025	0.0025	

# LINKS

## Regulatory Documents

- [GB 3095-1996](#), current nationwide standard
- [MEP Announcement \[2000\] No. 1](#) (revisions to GB 3095-1996)
- [GB 3095-2012](#), future standard phased-in 2012-2016
- [HJ 633-2012](#), AQI definition
- September 2013 State Council "[Air Pollution Prevention and Control Action Plan](#)"



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