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Pa. governor pushes back RGGI proposal deadline to September



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Theme **Energy**

Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf is giving the state's Department of Environmental Protection six more weeks to develop a proposed rule allowing the state to take part in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

The governor on June 22 issued an amended executive order postponing to Sept. 15 the deadline for the state environmental agency to present a rulemaking to the Pennsylvania Environmental Quality Board. In calling for a plan to abate, control or limit carbon dioxide emissions from power plants in an October 2019 executive order, Wolf initially gave the department a July 31 deadline.

Wolf said in a statement that even as state officials work to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, efforts to fight climate change must continue. "Amending this order will provide [the department, or DEP] with more time

to develop a strong plan without impacting our ... goals for implementing the regulation," the governor said.

The DEP had been expecting to release a draft CO2 reduction regulation in July as previously mandated, with a public hearing process starting in September. If the state decides to move ahead, Pennsylvania would join RGGI in 2022.

Ten northeastern and mid-Atlantic states — Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont — now take part in the program to cap and reduce carbon dioxide emissions from power plants. Most of the carbon dioxide allowances issued by participating states are allocated through quarterly auctions, with each individual state deciding how to use its auction proceeds.

The DEP expects the state to see a significant cut in greenhouse gas emissions from the power sector over the next decade if it joins in RGGI. But the proposal is opposed by a block of lawmakers who worry about whether a cap-and-trade program could hurt Pennsylvania's economy.

Echoing Wolf's remarks, DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell said having more time to gather feedback will result in a stronger regulation and will not affect the timeline for the regulation to take effect.

"Given the feedback from members of our advisory committees and the general public comments, and the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, we plan to continue our conversations and outreach among the environmental justice community, affected communities, and general public throughout this summer," McDonnell said in a statement.