

Fact Sheet

August 4, 2000

FINAL FEDERAL PLAN FOR EXISTING

HOSPITAL/MEDICAL/INFECTIOUS WASTE INCINERATORS

TODAY'S ACTION

- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is issuing a federal plan for hospital/medical/infectious waste incinerators (medical waste incinerators) constructed on or before June 20, 1996. The federal plan will ensure that affected incinerators make progress toward complying with emissions guidelines while states get their compliance plans approved and in place.
- The federal plan is part of a strategy to implement EPA's 1997 emission guidelines for hospital/medical/infectious waste incinerators. It applies to incinerators used by hospitals and health care facilities, as well as to incinerators used by commercial disposal companies to burn hospital waste and or medical/infectious waste.
- When burned, hospital and medical/infectious wastes emit a number of toxic air pollutants, including hydrochloric acid, dioxin/furan, lead, cadmium, and mercury.
- This final federal plan applies to medical waste incinerators located in states or tribal areas that do not yet have an EPA-approved plan in effect. The federal plan will apply until the state or tribe has an approved plan in effect. For the majority of incinerators located in Indian Country and on U.S. territories, the federal plan will be the sole implementing authority compelling these sources to meet the September 15, 2002 deadline for achieving the required emission reductions.
- The federal plan contains the same elements that state plans are required to contain, including source and emission inventories, emission limits, testing, monitoring, and reporting requirements, as well as compliance schedules that include increments of progress.
- The federal plan will not apply to the following states with approved plans: New York, North Dakota, Louisiana, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Indiana, Alabama, Georgia, Delaware, Idaho, Kansas, West Virginia, Colorado, Montana, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming, Mississippi, Alleghany County in Pennsylvania, and Arizona. A number of other states have submitted their plans and the federal plan will cease to apply once those are approved.

BACKGROUND

- EPA issued guidelines for hospital/medical/infectious waste incinerators in 1997. Those guidelines will significantly reduce emissions of nine pollutants. Nationwide, hydrogen chloride emissions will drop by 98 percent, dioxin/furan by about 96 percent, mercury by 95 percent, and particulate matter by about 90 percent. Some of these pollutants are considered to be carcinogens.
- States with existing incinerators subject to the emission guidelines had until September 15, 1998 to submit to EPA plans for implementing and enforcing the emission guidelines. Tribes have the option of submitting their own plans to implement the emission guidelines.
- EPA is required by law to develop, implement and enforce a federal plan for states and tribes that did not submit an approvable plan by September 15, 1999.

- Implementation of the hospital/medical/infectious waste incinerator emission guidelines through the federal and state plans is expected to reduce air emissions from existing incinerators as follows:

Nationwide Emission Reductions	
Dioxins/Furans	6,900 to 7,000 g/yr
Particulate Matter	820 to 870 Mg/yr
Carbon Monoxide	340 to 380 Mg/yr
Hydrochloric Acid	5,600 Mg/yr
Sulfur Dioxide	74 Mg/yr
Nitrogen Oxides	350 Mg/yr
Lead	8.6 to 9.4 Mg/yr
Cadmium	0.91 to 1.0 Mg/yr
Mercury	13.5 to 13.8 Mg/yr

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- To download the 1997 state implementation guidance document from EPA's World Wide Web site, go to <http://www.epa.gov/ttn/atw/129/hmiwi/rihmiwi.html> .
- For more information about the final federal plan, contact Ms. Valerie Broadwell of EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards at (919) 541-3310. For further information about the final emission guidelines, contact Mr. Rick Copland of EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards at (919) 541-5265.
- The EPA's Office of Air and Radiation home page on the Internet contains a wide range of information on the air toxics program and many other air pollution programs and issues. The address is: <http://www.epa.gov/oar>.