

June 22, 2001

**PROPOSED GUIDELINES FOR
BEST AVAILABLE RETROFIT TECHNOLOGY DETERMINATIONS
UNDER THE REGIONAL HAZE RULE**

FACT SHEET

TODAY'S ACTION

- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing to amend its regional haze rule to provide guidelines for state and tribal air quality agencies to use in determining how to set air pollution limits for a number of older, large utilities and other industrial plants.
- The 1999 regional haze rule sets regulations for visibility protection in the country's most treasured scenic areas. These 156 areas, which include the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, Yellowstone, Acadia, the Everglades and the Great Smoky Mountains national parks, draw nearly 300 million visitors a year
- Under the Clean Air Act, states must require certain older, large facilities to install the best emission controls available as part of state strategies for meeting the regional haze rule. This requirement, known as the best available retrofit technology (BART) requirement, applies to plants emitting pollutants that contribute to visibility degradation.
- The BART requirement applies to facilities built between 1962 and 1977 that have the potential to emit more than 250 tons a year of visibility-impairing pollution. Those facilities fall into 26 categories, including utility and industrial boilers, and large industrial plants such as pulp mills, refineries and smelters. Many of these facilities previously have been exempt from federal pollution control requirements under the Clean Air Act.
- The proposed amendment does not set federal emission limits for these plants; states will set those limits as they implement the regional haze rule. Today's amendment simply provides guidelines for states to use in determining which facilities must install controls and the type of controls they must use. It also provides guidance for states to use in considering other factors, such as cost and impact on energy, as they determine the facilities to be controlled.
- Under the 1999 regional haze rule, states are required to set periodic goals for improving visibility in the 156 natural areas. As they work to reach these goals, states must develop "implementation plans" that contain enforceable measures and strategies for reducing visibility-impairing pollution. In most areas of the country, the plans are due in 2008; however, states must identify by 2003 to 2005 (depending on their location) the facilities that will have to install BART controls. States must support their BART decisions in their implementation plans.

BACKGROUND

- During much of the year, a veil of white or brown haze hangs over many of the country's most visited natural areas, obscuring some of the nation's most famous scenic vistas. This haze – caused primarily by tiny particles that absorb and scatter sunlight – is a result of air pollution from power plants, cars and factories that travels hundreds of miles to some of the country's most remote lands.
- Emissions of visibility-damaging pollutants from these sources are substantial. Utilities potentially subject to the BART requirement emit about 6 million tons of sulfur dioxide a year. Sulfur dioxide emissions form visibility-damaging sulfate particles in the atmosphere, and they contribute to acid rain.
- The same pollution that causes haze also poses serious health risks, especially for people with chronic respiratory diseases.
- To reduce this haze, and to meet requirements of the Clean Air Act, EPA in April 1999 issued a regional haze rule aimed at protecting visibility in 156 federal areas. The rule seeks to reduce the visibility impairment caused by many sources over a wide area. EPA's previous visibility regulation, issued in 1980, addressed only local visibility impairment from local sources.
- The haze rule requires states to establish goals for improving visibility in national parks and wilderness areas and to develop long-term strategies for reducing emissions of air pollutants that impair visibility.

THE BART GUIDELINES

- As states determine which plants must control visibility-impairing emissions, they must consider a number of factors, including:
 - ▶ the cost of the controls;
 - ▶ the impact of controls on energy availability;
 - ▶ the remaining useful life of the equipment to be controlled;
 - ▶ whether the controls would cause environmental damage; and
 - ▶ the cumulative visibility improvement that would result from controlling the emissions.

These factors may lead states to use the best technology available, a less-effective technology, or none at all. The proposed amendment includes information to help states evaluate these issues.

- The proposed guidelines also explain:
 - ▶ How to identify the plants and equipment for which a BART analysis is required;
 - ▶ The limited circumstances under which a source may avoid a detailed BART review, because the area in which the source is located does not contribute to visibility damage;

- ▶ The procedures for reviewing available emission control methods, and procedures for summarizing and reporting the results of this review; and
- ▶ The type of cumulative air quality analysis that EPA requires in the regional haze regulation.
- The BART requirement directs state air quality agencies to identify whether emissions from sources subject to BART are well controlled, or whether retrofit measures are available to reduce the emissions below current levels. For some of the source categories, existing technology can reduce emissions by 90 to 95 percent.
- Today's proposed amendment also provides guidelines for states that want to establish an emissions trading program, an alternative to BART allowed under the haze rule. States may use such cost-effective trading programs, provided they yield greater visibility improvement and emissions reductions than would be expected through emission controls on each facility.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- To download a copy of today's proposed guidelines from EPA's Web site, go to "Recent Actions" at <http://www.epa.gov/oar/oarpg>
- To read a copy of the Regional Haze Rule, go to:
http://www.epa.gov/ttn/oarpg/t1/fr_notices/rhfedreg.pdf
- For more information, call the following people at EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning & Standards: Tim Smith, 919-541-4718; or Rich Damberg, 919-541-5592.

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