

September 27, 1996

FACT SHEET

FINAL RULE TO EXCLUDE THREE HALOGENATED COMPOUNDS FROM CONTROL AS VOLATILE ORGANIC COMPOUNDS (VOCs)

TODAY'S ACTION...

- ◆ The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is today issuing a final rule clarifying that three halogenated compounds should not be considered volatile organic compounds (VOCs) under the Clean Air Act. These compounds are hydrofluoro-carbon (HFC) 43-10mee and hydrochloro-fluorocarbon (HCFC) 225ca and cb.
- ◆ VOCs contribute significantly to the formation of ground-level ozone (smog). Exposure to ground-level ozone can cause serious respiratory illness.
- ◆ Today's action allows, but does not require, states to remove regulatory controls on these compounds as part of their state implementation plans to meet the national air quality standards for ground-level ozone.

WHY IS EPA EXEMPTING THESE COMPOUNDS AS VOC?

- ◆ EPA is exempting these compounds as VOCs because scientific evidence shows that HFC 43-10mee and HCFC 225ca and cb are "negligibly reactive," meaning they contribute little, if any, to the formation of smog. Since these halogenated compounds do not contribute to the smog problem, today's action to exempt the compounds as VOCs will help keep states focussed on controlling emissions of demonstrated ozone precursors in order to meet the national ambient air quality standard for ground-level ozone.
- ◆ A compound may be exempted as a VOC as a result of public petitions and new scientific data that demonstrate its negligible effect on the formation of smog. Since 1977, EPA has removed 21 specific compounds or classes of compounds from the list of VOCs that contribute to smog formation. EPA's policy on VOCs was codified in February 1992 in a revised regulation, "Requirements for Preparation, Adoption, and Submittal of State Implementation Plans."

- ◆ EPA has carefully reviewed scientific data and considered public comments before making the final decision to exempt these compounds from regulation as VOCs.

HOW DOES TODAY'S ACTION RELATE TO EPA'S STRATOSPHERIC PROTECTION PROGRAM?

- ◆ In the stratosphere, high altitude ozone forms a protective layer 10 to 35 miles above the earth to protect people from the sun's harmful ultraviolet rays, which can cause skin cancer, eye cataracts, and damage crops. Under the terms of the Montreal Protocol, the international agreement to protect the ozone layer, developed countries worldwide agreed to limit and eventually eliminate world-wide production of substances that destroy or deplete the stratospheric ozone layer by the turn of the century.
- ◆ Under the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, EPA is required to phase out the production and use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and other ozone-depleting substances. January 1, 1996 was the deadline to phase out of production two ozone-depleting substances, methyl chloroform and CFC-113, that were used primarily for precision cleaning of electronic and other delicate products.
- ◆ The three halogenated solvents that EPA is today exempting as VOCs contribute little, if any, to the destruction of the stratospheric ozone layer and have been proposed as acceptable substitutes for methyl chloroform and CFC-113 under EPA's Significant New Alternative Policy (SNAP) program. Under the Clean Air Act, EPA must examine substitutes to ozone-depleting substances, determine if they present adverse effects to human health and the environment, and list substitutes as acceptable or unacceptable.

HOW DOES TODAY'S ACTION PROVIDE REGULATORY RELIEF FOR INDUSTRY?

- ◆ By exempting HFC 43-10mee and HCFC 225ca and cb as VOCs, today's action will make it easier and less expensive for industry to use these compounds as substitutes for stratospheric ozone-depleting substances in precision cleaning of electronic and other delicate products.

FOR MORE INFORMATION...

- ◆ Anyone with a computer and a modem can download the final rule from the Clean Air Act Amendments bulletin board (look under "recently signed rules") of EPA's electronic Technology Transfer Network (TTN) by calling (919) 541-5742. For further information about how to access the board, call (919) 541-5384. For further information about the rule, contact Bill Johnson at EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards at (919) 541-5245. For more information about EPA's Stratospheric Protection Program, call the Stratospheric Ozone Hotline at 1-800-296-1996.