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FACT SHEET

PROPOSED RULE TO EXCLUDE METHYL ACETATE FROM CONTROL AS A VOLATILE ORGANIC COMPOUND (VOC)

TODAY'S ACTION...

- ◆ Today, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing that methyl acetate should no longer be considered a volatile organic compound (VOCs) under the Clean Air Act.
- ◆ VOCs contribute significantly to the formation of ground-level ozone (smog). Exposure to ground-level ozone can cause serious respiratory illness.
- ◆ Today's action would allow, but does not require, states to remove regulatory controls on methyl acetate that are part of state implementation plans designed to help states meet the national air quality standards for ground-level ozone.

WHY IS EPA PROPOSING TO EXCLUDE METHYL ACETATE AS VOC?

- ◆ EPA is proposing to exclude methyl acetate as a VOC because scientific evidence shows it is "negligibly reactive," meaning it contributes little or nothing to the formation of smog. Since EPA does not believe that methyl acetate contributes to the smog problem, today's proposal to exclude the compound as a VOC would help states to focus 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 excluded 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 40 specific compounds or classes of compounds from the list of VOCs that contribute to smog formation. EPA's policy on VOCs was codified on February 3, 1992 in a revised regulation, "Requirements for Preparation, Adoption, and Submittal of State Implementation Plans."
- ◆ EPA will carefully review any additional scientific data and consider all public comments before making a final decision to exclude methyl acetate from regulation as a VOC.

HOW DOES TODAY'S ACTION IMPACT THE ENVIRONMENT?

- ◆ Methyl acetate is not listed as a hazardous air pollutant under the Clean Air Act. In fact, methyl acetate is a potential substitute for other solvents that are hazardous air pollutants.

Hazardous air pollutants are also known as air toxics; these are pollutants which are known or suspected to cause cancer or other serious health effects such as birth defects or reproductive effects.

- ◆ Methyl acetate is not listed as a "toxic chemical" under section 313 of the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to Know Act of 1986 (EPCRA)
- ◆ Since methyl acetate contains no chlorine, it does not deplete stratospheric ozone.
- ◆ Therefore, the presence of methyl acetate in the air does not appear to negatively impact human health or the environment.

HOW DOES TODAY'S ACTION PROVIDE FLEXIBILITY AND REGULATORY RELIEF TO INDUSTRY?

- ◆ By excluding methyl acetate as a VOC, today's action would make it easier and less expensive for industry to use this compound as a solvent in a variety of products including paints, inks and adhesives. Methyl acetate may be used as a substitute for other solvents which are more harmful to the environment and which are more strictly regulated.

FOR MORE INFORMATION...

- ◆ Interested parties can download the rule from EPA's web site on the Internet under recently signed rules at the following address: (<http://www.epa.gov/ttn/oarpg/rules.html>). For further information about the rule, contact Bill Johnson at EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards at (919) 541-5245.
- ◆ EPA's Office of Air and Radiation's homepage on the Internet contains a wide range of information on the air toxics program, as well as many other air pollution programs and issues. The Office of Air and Radiation's home page address is: (<http://www.epa.gov/oar/>).