November 3, 1993

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Approaches to Creating Federally-Enforceable Emissions Limits

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The new operating permits program under title V of the Clean Air Act (Act), combined with the additional and lower thresholds for "major" sources also provided by the 1990 Amendments to the Act, has led to greatly increased interest by State and local air pollution control agencies, as well as sources, in obtaining federally-enforceable limits on source potential to emit air pollutants. Such limits entitle sources to be considered "minor" for the purposes of title V permitting and various other requirements of the Act. Numerous parties have identified this as a high priority concern potentially involving thousands of sources in each of the larger States.

The issue of creating federally-enforceable emissions limits has broad implications throughout air programs. Although many of the issues mentioned above have arisen in the context of the title V permits program, the same issues exist for other programs, including those under section 112 of the Act. As discussed below, traditional approaches to creating federally-enforceable emissions limits may be unnecessarily burdensome and time-consuming for certain types and sizes of sources. In addition, they have been of limited usefulness with respect to creating such limits for emissions of hazardous air pollutants (HAP's).

The purpose of this memorandum is to respond to these needs by announcing the availability of two further approaches to creating federally-enforceable emissions limits: the extension of existing criteria pollutant program mechanisms for HAP program purposes, and the creation of certain classes of standardized emissions limits by rule. We believe that these options are responsive to emerging air program implementation issues and provide a reasonable balance between the need for administrative streamlining and the need for emissions limits that are technically sound and enforceable.

Background

Various regulatory options already exist for the creation of federally-enforceable limits on potential to emit. These were summarized in a September 18, 1992 memorandum from John Calcagni, Director, Air Quality Management Division. That memorandum identified the five regulatory mechanisms generally seen as available. These are: State major and minor new source review (NSR) permits [if the NSR program has been approved into the State implementation plan (SIP) and meets certain procedural requirements]; operating permits based on programs approved into the SIP pursuant to the criteria in the June 28, 1989 Federal Register (54 FR 27274); and title V permits (including general permits). Also available are SIP limits for individual sources and limits for HAP's created through a State program approved pursuant to section 112(l) of the Act.

Regional Office and State air program officials realize that these five options are generally workable, but feel that the programs emerging from the 1990 Amendments present certain further needs that are not well met. They note that NSR is not always available, title V permitting can be more rigorous than appropriate for those sources that are in fact quite small, and that general permits have limitations in their usefulness. The use of State operating permits approved into the SIP pursuant to the June 28, 1989 Federal Register is generally considered to be a promising option for some of these transactions; however, these programs do not regulate toxics directly.

State Operating Permits for Both Criteria Pollutants and HAP's

As indicated above, State operating permits issued by programs approved into the SIP pursuant to the process provided in the June 28, 1989 Federal Register are recognized as federally enforceable. This is a useful option, but has historically been viewed as limited in its ability to directly create emissions limits for HAP's because of the SIP focus on criteria pollutants.

Since that option was created, however, section 112 of the Act has been rewritten, creating significant new regulatory requirements and conferring additional responsibilities and authorities upon the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the States. Section 112 now mandates a wide range of activities: source-specific preconstruction reviews, areawide approaches to controlling risk, provisions for permitting pursuant to the title V permitting program, and State program provisions in section 112(l) that are similar to aspects of the SIP program. A result of these changes is that implementation of toxics programs will entail the use of many of the same administrative mechanisms as have been in use for the criteria pollutant programs.

Upon further analysis of these new program mandates and corresponding authorities, EPA concludes that section 112 of the Act, including section 112(l), authorizes it to recognize these same State operating permits programs for the creation of federally-enforceable emissions limits in support of the implementation of section 112. Congress recognized, and longstanding State practice confirms, that operating permits are core-implementing mechanisms for air quality program requirements. This was EPA's basis for concluding that section 110 of the Act authorizes the recognition and approval into the SIP of operating permits pursuant to the June 28, 1989 promulgation, even though section 110 did not expressly provide for such a program. Similarly, broad provision of section 112(l) for "a program for the implementation and enforcement . . . of emission standards and other requirements for air pollutants subject to this section" provides a sound basis for EPA recognition of State operating permits for implementation and enforcement of section 112 requirements in the same manner as these permitting processes were recognized pursuant to section 110.

In implementing this authority to approve State operating permits programs pursuant to section 112, it should be noted that the specific criteria for what constitutes a federally-enforceable permit are also the same as for the existing SIP programs. The June 28, 1989 Federal Register essentially addressed in a generic sense the core criteria for creating federally-enforceable emissions limits in operating permits: appropriate procedural mechanisms, including public notice and opportunity for comment, statutory authority for EPA approval of the State program, and enforceability as a practical matter. The EPA did this in the context of SIP development, not because these criteria are specific to the SIP, but because section 110 of the Act was seen as our only certain statutory basis for this prior to the 1990 Amendments. Based on the discussion above, States can extend or develop State operating permits programs for toxics

pursuant to the criteria set forth in the June 28, 1989 Federal Register. The EPA is also evaluating analogous opportunities to enhance State NSR programs to address toxics and will address this in future guidance.

This is a significant opportunity to limit directly the emissions of HAP's. It also offers the advantage of the administrative efficiencies that arise from using existing administrative mechanisms, as opposed to creating additional ones.

States are encouraged to consult with EPA Regional Offices to discuss the details of adapting their current programs to carry out these additional functions. The EPA will consider State permitting programs meeting the criteria in the June 28, 1989 Federal Register as being approvable for HAP program functions as well. States may submit their programs for implementing this process with their part 70 program submittals, or at such other time as they choose. The EPA has various options for administratively recognizing these State program submittals. The EPA plans initially to review these State programs as SIP review actions, but with official recognition pursuant to authorities in both sections 110 and 112. Once rulemaking pursuant to section 112(l) of the Act is completed, EPA expects to use the process developed in that rule for approving State programs for HAP's. The section 112(l) process may be especially useful prior to EPA approval and implementation of the State title V programs. The reader may wish to refer to the process for certain section 112(l) approvals proposed on May 19, 1993 (58 FR 29296) (see section 63.91).

The General Provisions (40 CFR part 63) establish the applicability framework for the implementation of section 112. In the final rule, EPA will indicate that State operating permits programs which meet the procedural requirements of the June 28, 1989 Federal Register can be used to develop federally-enforceable emissions limits for HAP's, thereby limiting a source's potential to emit. In addition, after we gain implementation experience, EPA will be evaluating the usefulness of further rulemaking to define more specific criteria by which this process may be used in the implementation of programs under section 112 of the Act. Any such rulemaking could similarly be incorporated into the General Provisions in part 63.

State-Standardized Processes Created by Rule to Establish Source-Specific, Federally-Enforceable Emissions Limits

State air program officials have highlighted specific types of sources that are of particular administrative concern because

of their nature and number. These include sources whose emissions are primarily volatile organic compounds (VOC) arising from use of solvents or coatings, such as automobile body shops. Another example is fuel-burning sources that have low actual emissions because of limited hours of operation, but with the potential to emit sulfur dioxide in amounts sufficient to cause them to be classified as major sources.

The EPA recognizes that emissions limitations for some processes can be created through standardized protocols. For example, limitations on potential to emit could be established for certain VOC sources on the basis of limits on solvent use, backed up by recordkeeping and by periodic reporting. Similarly, limitations on sulfur dioxide emissions could be based on specified sulfur content of fuel and the source's obligation to limit usage to certain maximum amounts. Limits on hours of operation may be acceptable for certain others sources, such as standby boilers. In all cases, of course, the technical requirements would need to be supported by sufficient compliance procedures, especially monitoring and reporting, to be considered enforceable.

The EPA concludes that such protocols could be relied on to create federally-enforceable limitations on potential to emit if adopted through rulemaking and approved by EPA. Although such an approach is appropriate for only a limited number of source categories, these categories include large numbers of sources, such as dry cleaners, auto body shops, gas stations, printers, and surface coaters. If such standardized control protocols are sufficiently reliable and replicable, EPA and the public need not be involved in their application to individual sources, as long as the protocols themselves have been subject to notice and opportunity to comment and have been approved by EPA into the SIP.

To further illustrate this concept and to provide implementation support to the States, EPA has recently released guidance on one important way of using this process. This document, entitled "Guidance for State Rules for Optional Federally-Enforceable Emissions Limits Based on Volatile Organic Compound Use," was issued by D. Kent Berry, Acting Director, Air Quality Management Division, on October 15, 1993. It describes approvable processes by which States can create federally-enforceable emissions limits for VOC for large numbers of sources in a variety of source categories.

States have flexibility in their choice of administrative process for implementation. In some cases, it may be adequate for a State to apply these limits to individual sources through a

registration process rather than a permit. A source could simply submit a certification to the State committing to comply with the terms of an approved protocol. Violations of these certifications would constitute SIP violations, in the case of protocols approved into the SIP, and be subject to the same enforcement mechanisms as apply in the case of any other SIP violation. Such violations would, of course, also subject the source to enforcement for failure to comply with the requirements that apply to major sources, such as the requirement to obtain a title V permit or comply with various requirements of section 112 of the Act.

Some States have also indicated an interest in more expansive approaches to implementing this concept, such as making presumptive determinations of control equipment efficiency with respect to particular types of sources and pollutants. While such approaches are more complicated and present greater numbers of concerns in the EPA review process, they offer real potential if properly crafted. The EPA will evaluate State proposals and approve them if they are technically sound and enforceable as a practical matter.

States may elect to use this approach to create federally-enforceable emissions limits for sources of HAP's as well. Based on the same authorities in section 112 of the Act, as cited above in the case of operating permits, EPA can officially recognize such State program submittals. As with the operating permits option discussed in the preceding section, EPA plans initially to review these activities as SIP revisions, but with approval pursuant to both sections 110 and 112 of the Act, and approve them through the section 112(l) process when that rule is final.

Implementation Guidance

As indicated above, the creation of federally-enforceable limits on a source's potential to emit involves the identification of the procedural mechanisms for these efforts, including the statutory basis for their approval by EPA, and the technical criteria necessary for their implementation. Today's guidance primarily addresses the procedural mechanisms available and the statutory basis for EPA approval.

The EPA will be providing further information with respect to the implementation of these concepts. As described above, the first portion of this guidance, addressing limits on VOC emissions, was issued on October 15, 1993. My office is currently working with Regional Offices and certain States in order to assist in the development of program options under consideration by those States. We will provide technical and

regulatory support to other State programs and will make the results of these efforts publicly available through the Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards (OAQPS) Technology Transfer Network bulletin board.

We will provide further support through the release of a document entitled "Enforceability Requirements for Limiting Potential to Emit Through SIP Rules and General Permits," which is currently undergoing final review within EPA. In addition, EPA will be highlighting options for use of existing technical guidance with respect to creating sound and enforceable emissions limits. An important example of such guidance is the EPA "Blue Book," which has been in use by States for the past 5 years as part of their VOC control programs.

States are encouraged to discuss program needs with their EPA Regional Offices. The OAQPS will work with them in addressing approvals. As indicated, additional technical guidance for implementing these approaches is underway and will be made publicly available soon. For further information, please call Kirt Cox at (919) 541-5399.

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