

Frequently Asked Questions on the Proposed Endangerment and Cause or Contribute Findings for Greenhouse Gases



What is the EPA Administrator proposing?

The Administrator is proposing two distinct “findings.” First, in the “**Endangerment Finding**” the Administrator proposes that the mix of atmospheric concentrations of six key greenhouse gases threatens the public health and welfare of current and future generations. These six greenhouse gases are: carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs), and sulfur hexafluoride (SF₆). These greenhouse gases in the atmosphere constitute the “air pollution” that threatens public health and welfare.

Second, in the “**Cause or Contribute Finding**” the Administrator proposes that the combined emissions of CO₂, CH₄, N₂O, and HFCs from new motor vehicles and motor vehicle engines contribute to the atmospheric concentrations of these key greenhouse gases and hence to the threat of climate change.

Will the Proposed Findings impose any requirements under the Clean Air Act?

Today’s proposed action, as well as any final action in the future, would not itself impose any requirements on industry or other entities. An endangerment finding under one provision of the Clean Air Act would not by itself automatically trigger regulation under the entire Act.

What was the Administrator’s rationale for issuing this Proposal?

With this proposal, the Administrator is responding to the April 2007 *Massachusetts v. EPA* Supreme Court decision, in which the court found that greenhouse gases are air pollutants under the Clean Air Act. The Court held that the Administrator must determine whether or not emissions of greenhouse gases from new motor vehicles cause or contribute to air pollution which may reasonably be anticipated to endanger public health or welfare, or whether the science is too uncertain to make a reasoned decision.

It is the Administrator’s judgment that the total body of scientific evidence compellingly supports her proposal that greenhouse gases threaten both public health and welfare. The Administrator reached this conclusion after considering both current and projected future effects of climate change and after considering the full range of risks and impacts to public health and welfare occurring within the United States. The Administrator believes that the effects within the United States by themselves warrant this judgment. The Administrator also considered the scientific evidence concerning risks and impacts occurring outside the United States, including risks and impacts that can affect people in the United States, and finds that they provide further support for this finding.

With regard to the cause or contribute finding, the Administrator considered that the combined emissions of greenhouse gases from all on-road vehicles (i.e., those covered under section 202(a) of the Clean Air Act) contribute to both total U.S. (24 percent) and total global (over 4 percent) greenhouse gas emissions.

On what science was the proposed Endangerment Finding based?

The Administrator relied heavily on existing, peer-reviewed scientific literature. In particular, she relied on reports and conclusions from the U.S. Climate Change Science Program, the National Research Council, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change because they represent the current state of knowledge on climate change science, vulnerabilities, and impacts. These studies are authored by leading scientific experts and underwent multiple layers of peer review, including, in many cases, review and acceptance by government agencies.

This fact sheet is intended to assist the public to understand key aspects of the proposal. However, this fact sheet is not intended to be a substitution for the proposal itself. Visit EPA's website at the address above for more information, including the proposal, or go to www.regulations.gov to access the rulemaking docket (EPA-HQ-OAR-2009-0171) which will be opened when the proposal is published in the Federal Register. For questions that cannot be answered through the Web site or docket, call 202-343-9927.