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FACT SHEET

PROPOSAL TO RE-ESTABLISH AIR REGULATIONS FOR SMALL MUNICIPAL WASTE COMBUSTORS

Today's Action

- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is issuing a proposed rule to re-establish air regulations for small municipal waste combustor (MWC) units. The proposal would reduce emissions of air pollutants from small waste-to-energy plants, which generate energy from garbage, and incinerators.

- This proposed rule would reduce emissions of certain harmful air pollutants, including dioxin and mercury, which are known or suspected to cause adverse health and environmental effects.

- To develop the rule, EPA worked closely with industry, environmental groups, State and local agencies like the National Association of Counties and the U. S. Conference of Mayors, and other stakeholders.

What Environmental and Health Benefits Would Result from this Rule?

- This rule would reduce emissions of a number of air pollutants including organics, metals, and acid gases by approximately 4,700 tons per year.

- Based on 1990 emissions data, this rule would reduce dioxin emissions from small municipal waste combustors by at least 97 percent. In combination with EPA's 1995 regulations for large municipal waste combustor units, dioxin emissions from large and small municipal waste combustors would then account for less than half of one percent of the known sources of dioxin. Dioxin is a pollutant of particular concern because it persists in the environment and bioaccumulates. These characteristics cause dioxin to move through the food chain and biomagnify.

- Based on 1990 emissions data, this rule would reduce mercury emissions from small municipal waste combustors by 95 percent. In combination with EPA's 1995 regulations for large municipal waste comustion units, lead emissions from large and small municipal waste combustors would then account for less than two percent of the U.S. inventory for mercury emissions. Mercury is highly toxic, persistent in the environment and bioaccumulates, particularly in fish. Human exposure to mercury occurs primarily through the food chain.

What Would this Rule Require?

! This rule would re-establish new source performance standards for new small MWC units and emission guidelines for existing small MWC units. When fully implemented, these regulations would result in the application of maximum achievable control technology to all small MWC units.

! This rule would require compliance with stringent emission limits for organics (dioxin/furans), metals (cadmium, lead, mercury, and particulate matter), and acid gases (hydrogen chloride, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen oxides).

What Wastes and Types of Combustion Units Would Be Covered by this Rule?

! This rule would apply to the combustion of municipal waste or trash. This includes discards from residential housing, apartments, restaurants, shopping centers, office buildings, and other similar discards. It does not include the combustion of hazardous waste, industrial manufacturing waste, or medical waste as they are regulated under other standards.

! This rule would apply to the 90 existing waste-to-energy units and incinerators and any future incinerators with the capacity to burn between 35 and 250 tons of garbage per day. Under this proposal, existing units are those that are constructed on or before the date of this proposal and new units are those that are constructed after that date.

! About 70% of the small MWC units are publicly owned and about 30% are privately owned.

How Much Would this Rule Cost?

• When fully implemented in five years, the regulation would cost about $50 million/year or about $1/month per household located in a municipality where a MWC is used for solid waste disposal.

Background

! Under the Section 129 of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, EPA is required to revise the earlier MWC regulations to address additional pollutants and to regulate both large and small MWC units based on maximum achievable control technology (MACT). EPA proposed the revised regulations in September 1994 and promulgated them December 1995.

! In 1996, shortly after promulgation of the revised regulations, the owners of the Davis County, Utah, MWC and others filed suit requesting seprate regulations from small and large MWC units. On April 8, 1997, the court issued an order requiring EPA to establish

separate regulations for small and large MWC units. Today's proposal would be the first step in EPA re-establishing separate regulations for small MWC units.

! An individual generates almost a ton of municipal waste per year. Disposal of municipal solid waste is currently managed: by dumping in landfills (55%), by recycling (28%), and by incineration (17%).

For Further Information

- Visit EPA's web site for small MWCs at: http://*www.epa.gov/ttn/uatw/129/mwc/rimwc2.html* or contact Walt Stevenson at EPA (919-541-5264).

- EPA's Office of Air and Radiation's home page on the Internet contains a wide range of information on the air pollution programs including air toxics issues. The Office of Air and Radiation's home page address is: *http://www.epa.gov/oar/*.