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FACT SHEET

AMENDMENTS TO THE NEW SOURCE PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AND EMISSION GUIDELINES FOR MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE LANDFILLS

TODAY'S ACTION

- ! The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing amendments and clarifications of the existing air emission regulations for landfills. Although these amendments clarify the regulation for landfill owners and regulatory agencies, they do not change the emission control requirements or the impact of the regulation.

BACKGROUND

- ! On March 12, 1996 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), under authority of the Clean Air Act, issued a final regulation that controls emissions of a variety of air pollutants from new and existing large municipal waste landfills. The regulation included a New Source Performance Standard (NSPS) that applied to new, modified, and reconstructed landfills as well as emission guidelines that applied to existing landfills.
- ! The regulation requires installation of gas collection and control systems for new and existing landfills designed to hold 2.5 million megagrams and 2.5 million cubic meters or more of waste that emit greater than or equal to 50 megagrams per year of non-methane organic compounds (NMOC). The gas control systems must reduce landfill emissions by 98 percent. Landfills subject to EPA's regulation accept and handle everyday household waste; they do not handle regulated hazardous waste.
- ! EPA is amending the regulation to modify definitions and to clarify the timing of a landfill's permit obligations. Also, EPA is making several editorial modifications for consistency and clarity. The changes to the regulation will not have significant impacts on the originally projected compliance costs, environmental benefits, burden on industry, or the number of affected facilities.

HOW DID EPA MODIFY THE REGULATION?

- ! These amendments offer a landfill-specific definition of the term "modification". Modification is defined for landfills as "an increase in the permitted volume design capacity of the landfill by either horizontal or vertical expansion". The definition is now consistent with the definition of modification in the code of federal regulations for physical or operational changes that do not require a capital expenditure. Increased emissions from landfills are based on the amount and character of the waste placed in the landfill. Therefore, modification is defined in terms of permitted design capacity, rather than

physical or operational changes to equipment or production methods.

WHAT ARE THE HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS OF THIS ACTION?

- ! The amendments will not change the health and environmental benefits of the final rule since the changes to the rule were primarily technical corrections and clarifications.
- ◆ As the waste in a landfill decomposes, it breaks down to form landfill gases, such as methane, smog-causing volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and air toxics, pollutants known or suspected of causing cancer and other serious health effects. Landfills are the largest anthropogenic source of methane emissions in the United States. Methane is a potent greenhouse gas that contributes to global warming.
- ◆ EPA's final air rules for municipal solid waste landfills will achieve significant reductions in emissions of VOCs and air toxics, such as benzene, carbon tetrachloride, and chloroform. EPA's regulation will reduce emissions of VOCs, air toxics, and malodorous compounds from existing and new landfills by over 90,000 tons annually (a 53 percent reduction from current levels). The final rulemaking will also result in significant reductions in emissions of methane, a major constituent of landfill gas and a potent greenhouse gas. By reducing methane emissions, EPA's regulation will also increase safety in and near landfills.

WHO WILL BE AFFECTED BY THE AMENDMENTS?

- ! The amendments will apply to the same number of facilities that the final rule applies to since the changes to the rule were primarily technical corrections and clarifications.
- ! Approximately 7000 landfills exist in the United States. Only about 4 percent of the existing landfills nationwide will be subject to the final regulation. Of the 900 new landfills estimated to open during the next five years, approximately 5 percent will be subject to the final regulation.

FOR FURTHER 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 on the amendments, contact Ms. Michele Laur of EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards at (919) 541-5256.
- ! 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/>).