

FACT SHEET

Final Standards of Performance for New Residential Wood Heaters and New Residential Hydronic Heaters and Forced-Air Furnaces

ACTION

- On March 11, 2020, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued final amendments to the New Source Performance Standards (NSPS) for New Residential Wood Heaters and New Residential Hydronic Heaters and Forced-Air Furnaces. This rule amends the 2015 NSPS by removing certain minimum requirements for pellet fuels and clarifying a requirement regarding the use of unseasoned wood in pellet fuel production.
- This final rule will not affect existing units that are currently in use by homeowners. It also will not replace state or local requirements governing wood heating device use.
- Concerning pellet fuels, after reviewing public comments, EPA is removing the minimum requirements from the 2015 NSPS. However, the agency is retaining the prohibition – stated in the eighth pellet fuel minimum requirement – that pellet fuel must not contain any of the prohibited fuels listed in the 2015 NSPS.
 - Operators of pellet fuel heaters may only burn pellets specified in the owner’s manual and graded according to a licensing agreement by an EPA-approved third-party organization, and these pellets must not include any materials prohibited by the EPA in the NSPS. This ensures that the quality of the pellet fuel remains intact.
 - Minimum requirements are already included in the standards used by the Pellet Fuels Institute and other EPA-approved third parties for the grading of pellet fuels.
- EPA is maintaining the compliance dates set forth in the 2015 NSPS. Retailers will have until May 15, 2020, to sell wood heating devices that do not comply with more stringent “Step 2” emission standards. EPA is not providing a sell-through period which would have allowed retailers additional time to sell certain wood heating devices beyond the May 2020 compliance date.

BACKGROUND

- Wood-burning heaters (also referred to in the final rule as wood heating devices) include wood stoves, pellet stoves, hydronic heaters and forced-air furnaces that burn wood for heat, including cord wood and wood pellets.
- Wood smoke is made up of a mixture of gases and fine particles that are produced when wood and other organic matter burns. The particles in smoke – also called particulate matter (PM) – can harm the lungs, blood vessels and heart. People with heart, vascular or lung disease, older adults and children are the most at risk.

- Smoke from wood heating devices can increase PM to levels that pose serious health concerns. In some areas, residential wood smoke is a primary contributor to the area's nonattainment for the 24-hour PM_{2.5} National Ambient Air Quality Standard.
- The Clean Air Act requires EPA to set NSPS for categories of stationary sources of pollution that cause, or significantly contribute to, air pollution that may endanger public health or welfare. The law requires EPA to review these standards every 8 years.
- EPA issued the first NSPS for residential wood heaters in 1988. The rule applied to adjustable burn-rate wood stoves, including a type of adjustable burn-rate wood stove known as a fireplace insert, and some pellet stoves. Since that time, technology for reducing emissions from wood heating devices has significantly improved and is available to make new units less polluting.
- The agency amended the standards in 2015. The 2015 standards include a phase-in of requirements to build cleaner wood heating devices that meet more stringent standards. The 2015 final NSPS requirements updated PM emission limits for newly manufactured adjustable burn-rate wood stoves and set the first federal air standards for several other types of wood heating devices, including: all pellet stoves; indoor and outdoor wood-burning hydronic heaters; wood-burning forced-air furnaces; and a type of previously unregulated wood stove known as a "single burn-rate" stove.
- The 2015 NSPS also included updated test methods, an updated certification process, and a requirement that operators of wood heating devices burn only the fuel specified in the owner's manual, including pellet fuel, that meet certain minimum requirements.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- EPA's Burn Wise program provides a wealth of information to help consumers ensure wood heating devices burn as cleanly and efficiently as possible. For more information, visit: <https://www.epa.gov/burnwise>.
- Today's final rule and additional background information is available at <https://www.epa.gov/residential-wood-heaters>.
- For further technical information about the rule, contact Rochelle Boyd, EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards, at (919) 541-1390 or boyd.rochelle@epa.gov.