

## FACT SHEET

### Proposed Amendments Standards of Performance for New Residential Wood Heaters and New Residential Hydronic Heaters and Forced-Air Furnaces

#### ACTION

- On May 15, 2020, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed amendments to the 2015 New Source Performance Standards (NSPS) for New Residential Wood Heaters and New Residential Hydronic Heaters and Forced-Air Furnaces.
- Due to the nationwide spread of the COVID-19 virus, EPA is proposing to allow more time for retailers to continue selling Step 1-certified residential wood heating devices. If finalized, EPA's proposed action would authorize the commercial sale of Step 1-certified devices until November 30, 2020.
  - This action, if finalized as proposed, will allow retailers additional time, after the May 15, 2020 effective date of the "Step 2" standards, to continue to sell "Step 1" compliant wood heaters, hydronic heaters and forced-air furnaces remaining in inventory.
- On March 11, 2020, EPA finalized rule amendments to the 2015 NSPS. Shortly after the March amendments, the U.S. experienced an unprecedented economic crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic has resulted in significant losses in retail sales due to temporary closure of stores, stay at home directives, and other restrictions implemented across the country and the world.
  - As a result, vendors and retail stores have lost time they needed to sell their remaining inventory of Step 1 units before the May 15, 2020, compliance date.
  - Retailers would have been working diligently toward selling those remaining Step 1 devices by offering discounts, sales events and other incentives to move that remaining inventory before the May 15, 2020, deadline. This has resulted in circumstances that could result in significant job losses, permanent closures and other economic impacts that were not anticipated when EPA was developing the previous NSPS rulemakings.
- This proposed rule, if finalized, will ensure that retailers and manufacturers regain some time with normal business operations lost due to the COVID-19 emergency. In addition, during the period between May 15, 2020, and publication of EPA's final action on this proposal, EPA will treat the sale of Step 1 devices as a low enforcement priority.
- EPA will accept comment on the proposed amendments for 45 days after publication in the *Federal Register*.
- If requested, a virtual public hearing will be held fifteen days after the proposal is published. Additional information including speaker registration will be available at <https://www.epa.gov/residential-wood-heaters>.

## BACKGROUND

- Wood-burning heaters (also known 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<sub>2.5</sub> 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.

## HOW TO COMMENT

- EPA will accept comments for 45 days after the proposal is published in the *Federal Register*.
- Comments, identified by Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2018-0195 may be submitted by one of the following methods:
  - Go to <https://www.regulations.gov/> and follow the on-line instructions for submitting comments.
  - Send comments by email to [a-and-r-docket@epa.gov](mailto:a-and-r-docket@epa.gov), Attention Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OAR-2018-0195.
- Out of an abundance of caution for members of the public and our staff, the EPA Docket Center and Reading Room is closed to public visitors to reduce the risk of transmitting COVID-19. Our Docket Center staff will continue to provide remote customer service via

email, phone and webform. We encourage the public to submit comments via <https://www.regulations.gov/> or email, as there is a temporary suspension of mail delivery to the EPA, and no hand deliveries are currently accepted. For further information on EPA Docket Center services and the current status, please visit us online at <https://www.epa.gov/dockets>.

#### **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 proposed rule and additional background information is available at <https://www.epa.gov/residential-wood-heaters>.
- For further technical information about the rule, contact Nathan Topham, EPA's Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards, at (919) 541-0483 or [topham.nathan@epa.gov](mailto:topham.nathan@epa.gov).