

# SMALLBIZ@EPA

EPA's Asbestos and Small Business Ombudsman Program

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE REGULATED SMALL BUSINESS COMMUNITY

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## POLICY AND REGULATION

### **Biden-Harris Administration Proposes to Strengthen the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards for Power Plants**

On April 5, 2023, EPA proposed to strengthen and update the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards (MATS) for coal-fired power plants, achieving important hazardous air pollutant emissions reductions and ensuring standards reflect the latest advancements in pollution control technologies. These public health protections are especially important for anyone affected by hazardous air pollution, including children and particularly vulnerable segments of the population such as Indigenous communities, low-income communities, and people of color who live near power plants.

This proposed rule, the most significant update since MATS was first issued in February

2012, fulfills EPA's responsibility under the Clean Air Act to periodically review emission standards. Earlier this year EPA [reaffirmed](#) the scientific, economic, and legal underpinnings of the standards, reversing a rule issued by the previous administration that undermined the legal basis for these vital health protections.

[Read the press release](#)

## **Proposal to Strengthen Standards for Synthetic Organic Chemical Plants and Polymers and Resins Plants**

On April 6, 2023, EPA announced a proposal to significantly reduce emissions of toxic and other harmful air pollution from chemical plants, including the highly toxic chemicals ethylene oxide (EtO) and chloroprene. The reductions would dramatically reduce the number of people with elevated air toxics-related cancer risks in communities surrounding the plants that use those two chemicals, especially communities historically overburdened by air toxics pollution, and cut more than 6,000 tons of toxic air pollution a year. [Read the proposal](#)

## **EPA Proposes New Standards to Protect Public Health, Reduce Exposure to Ethylene Oxide Pollution**

On April 11, 2023, EPA proposed new health protections to reduce exposure to ethylene oxide (EtO), including more stringent air emissions standards and additional protections for workers who are exposed to the gas used to sterilize medical devices and certain spices. If finalized, EPA's proposals are estimated to cut EtO emissions to the air from commercial sterilization facilities by 80% per year and apply more protective standards to control those emissions under the law. Together, these proposals will provide a comprehensive approach to addressing EtO pollution concerns, including cancer risk, that will increase safety in communities and for workers while providing a path to maintain a robust supply chain for sterilized medical equipment.

[Read the press release](#)

## **Biden-Harris Administration Proposes Strongest-Ever Pollution Standards for Cars and Trucks to Accelerate Transition to a Clean-Transportation Future**

On April 12, 2023, EPA announced new proposed federal vehicle emissions standards that will accelerate the ongoing transition to a clean vehicles future and tackle the

climate crisis. The proposed standards would improve air quality for communities across the nation, especially communities that have borne the burden of polluted air. Together, these proposals would avoid nearly 10 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, equivalent to more than twice the total U.S. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in 2022, while saving thousands of dollars over the lives of the vehicles meeting these new standards and reduce America's reliance on approximately 20 billion barrels of oil imports. [Read the press release](#)

## **EPA Takes Important Step to Advance PFAS Strategic Roadmap, Requests Public Input and Data to Inform Potential Future Regulations under CERCLA**

On April 13, 2023, EPA issued an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) asking the public for input regarding potential future hazardous substance designations of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), also known as "Superfund."

This request for input and information follows EPA's September 2022 proposed rule to designate two PFAS – perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS), and their salts and structural isomers – as hazardous substances under CERCLA. EPA is currently reviewing comments received on this proposed rule. [Read the press release](#)

## **EPA Proposes Ban on All Consumer, Most Industrial and Commercial Uses of Methylene Chloride to Protect Public Health**

On April 20, 2023, EPA announced the latest action to protect public health under the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), proposing a ban on most uses of [methylene chloride](#), a dangerous chemical known to cause serious health risks and even death.

The proposal would protect people from these risks while allowing for some uses to continue only where strict workplace controls could be implemented to minimize exposures to workers. Methylene chloride is the second chemical to undergo risk management under the reformed process created by the 2016 Frank R. Lautenberg Chemical Safety for the 21st Century Act, following agency proposed actions to protect people from asbestos exposure last year. [Read the press release](#)

## **Biden-Harris Administration Announces Latest Steps to Reduce Plastic Pollution Nationwide**

On April 21, 2023, EPA released the draft titled “National Strategy to Prevent Plastic Pollution” for public comment, a significant step forward in the Biden-Harris Administration’s efforts to reduce pollution and build a circular economy for all. EPA’s draft strategy includes ambitious actions to eliminate the release of plastic and other waste from land-based sources into the environment by 2040. [Read the press release](#)

## **Protection of Stratospheric Ozone: Listing of Substitutes Under the Significant New Alternatives Policy Program in Refrigeration, Air Conditioning, and Fire Suppression**

Pursuant to EPA’s Significant New Alternatives Policy program, this action lists certain substances as acceptable, subject to use conditions, in the refrigeration and air conditioning sector for chillers—comfort cooling, residential dehumidifiers, residential and light commercial air conditioning and heat pumps, and a substance as acceptable, subject to use conditions and narrowed use limits, in very low temperature refrigeration. Through this action, EPA is incorporating by reference standards which establish requirements for electrical air conditioners, heat pumps, and dehumidifiers, laboratory equipment containing refrigerant, safe use of flammable refrigerants, and safe design, construction, installation, and operation of refrigeration systems. Finally, this action lists certain substances as acceptable, subject to use conditions, in the fire suppression sector for certain streaming and total flooding uses. This rule is effective May 30, 2023. [Read the rule in Federal Register](#)



## **KEY DATES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

### **EPA Reaffirms Commitment to Supporting Small Businesses During National Small Business Week**

During the first week of May, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) celebrated [National Small Business Week](#), paying tribute to the 33.1 million American small businesses that employ almost half of the private-sector workforce. In observance

of National Small Business Week, EPA's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) hosted a series of events that included small business contracting training and a vendor engagement event that connected small businesses with EPA program officials and large prime contractors.

The highlight of the week's activities was the EPA Administrator's 33rd Annual Small Business Program Awards Ceremony, held on May 4, 2023. The ceremony honored exemplary EPA employees and program offices, as well as industry and state partners who contributed to EPA's small business championship in Fiscal Year 2022.

Award recipients this year included Christine Hoefler and Kaitlin Urso of the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment's Small Business Environmental Assistance Program, and Keith Johnson of EPA Region 7's Regional Air Small Business Liaison. A complete list of the award recipients can be found in [EPA's press release](#).

## **The EPA Region 6 Announces a Total of \$23 Million to Organizations to Advance Environmental Justice**

On April 20, 2023, EPA announced The Deep South for Environmental Justice and the New Mexico State University have been selected to serve as Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers (EJ TCTACs) that will receive at least \$10 million each to help communities across the Region 6 access funds from President Biden's Investing in America agenda. The Deep South Center for Environmental Justice will receive \$13,000,000 and the New Mexico State University will receive \$10,000,000. [Read the press release](#)



**ASK SBEAP**

*Dear Ask SBEAP:*

*I operate a small business in the rural part of the town, and in spring I see a lot of smoke in the area caused by open burning practices. During good weather I bike to work, but lately, I have been experiencing respiratory and allergy issues due to burning.*

*I wonder if there is a way I can find the current air quality in my area, based on which I can enjoy my outdoors?*

*Sincerely, Joy Gardner*

Dear Joy,

[AirNow](#) is a one-stop source for air quality data in your local area and provides current and forecast air quality maps and data for more than 500 cities across the U.S. [AirNow](#) also informs you about current fire conditions including fire locations, smoke plumes. In short it tells you how clean or unhealthy your air is, and what associated health effects might be a concern.

EPA has established an [Air Quality Index](#) (AQI) to make information available about the health effects of five major pollutants regulated by the Clean Air Act: ground level ozone, particle pollution, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide. [AQI](#) is a measure that runs from 0 to 500 and is also divided into six levels of health concern. The higher the [AQI](#) value, the greater the level of air pollution and the greater the health concern. Active people of all age groups who spend more time outdoors are at risk and suffer from coughing; eye, nose, throat and airway irritation; chest tightness; or chest pain when taking a deep breath. However, people with marginal or compromised cardiovascular and respiratory systems and infants are a greater risk and are more likely to visit emergency rooms.

You can visit [AirNow](#) to find out whether [AQI](#) levels are a concern in your area and take simple steps to reduce your exposure to unhealthy air. For example, you may go for a walk instead of a jog or plan your outdoor activities for days when the [AQI](#) is not concerning. If you have questions, contact the [National SBEAP](#) hotline or your [state SBEAP](#).





## SPOTLIGHT

### **EPA Makes Trends in Domestic Chemical Production and Imports More Accessible to the Public with the First Ever Chemical Data Reporting National Review**

On March 31, 2023, EPA published the first ever [Chemical Data Reporting \(CDR\) National Review](#), a web-based, interactive report with comprehensive analysis of data submitted to the Agency during the 2020 CDR reporting cycle. The National Review increases public awareness of chemicals being manufactured in communities and helps EPA and a variety of stakeholders (including citizens and communities, other regulatory agencies, industry, researchers and nongovernmental organizations) evaluate and understand information including the types, quantities and uses of chemicals produced domestically or imported into the U.S. [Read the press release](#)

### **EPA Publishes 30th Annual U.S. Greenhouse Gas Inventory**

On April 13, 2023, EPA released its 30th annual [Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks \(GHG Inventory\)](#), which presents a national-level overview of annual greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 to 2021. Net U.S. greenhouse gas emissions were 5,586 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent in 2021, a 6% increase in emissions from 2020. The increase is largely due to a rebound in economic activity following the height of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. However, emissions have declined overall since 2005 (17%), which reflects the combined impacts of several factors, including energy market trends, technological changes including energy efficiency improvements, and the carbon intensity of energy fuel choices. [Learn more about the report.](#)



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