



Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development

Contact: Ella Haines: +1.202.338.1300, ehaines@igsd.org

Environmental organizations call on EPA to eliminate super greenhouse gases from household and small commercial refrigeration

Washington D.C., 1 May 2012. – This past Friday, the Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development (IGSD) and the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) joined the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) in a petition to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to end federal approval of the use of the super greenhouse gas, HFC134a, in household and stand-alone freezers and refrigerators. HFC134a is known as a super greenhouse gas because this man-made refrigerant has a global warming potential 1,430 times that of CO₂. The petition follows one approved by the EPA filed by the same groups in 2010 to replace HFC134a in mobile vehicle air conditioners with available low-GWP alternatives. Granting of the petitions will eliminate HFCs with high global warming potential from two of the largest emissions sources.

HFCs are the fastest growing greenhouse gases in many countries including the US, where they grew nearly 9% between 2009 and 2010 compared to 3.6% for CO₂. Emissions are growing so fast they threaten to push the climate system past the 2°C outer guardrail for a safe climate in a matter of decades. Without fast action to limit their growth, the climate forcing of HFCs could equal nearly 20% of CO₂ emissions by 2050, or about the same as current annual emissions from transport, and up to 45% of CO₂ emissions if CO₂ emissions are limited to 450 ppm.

The latest petition requests the EPA delist HFC134a as an acceptable refrigerant, which it approved more than 20 years ago under its Significant New Alternatives Program (SNAP), a program designed to identify safe alternatives for ozone depleting substances phased out under the Montreal Protocol. The EPA has already approved other alternatives with at least 250 times less impact on the climate than HFC134a while achieving the same or better energy efficiency.

“Cutting HFCs presents the biggest, fastest piece of climate mitigation available to the world in the next few years,” stated Durwood Zaelke, President of the Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development. “Approximately 20% of HFC emissions globally come from the refrigeration sector. Eliminating emissions from new residential refrigerators in the US will bring us a big step closer to eliminating all high GWP HFCs around the globe.”

Also included in the petition is a request that the EPA end the use of HFC134a in other sectors by restricting sale of the gas to EPA-certified technicians, which could reduce emission from vehicle servicing by 40-45%, and ending its use in non-essential products like Dust-Off sprays and string party foam like Silly String®.

The petition can be found here: http://docs.nrdc.org/globalwarming/files/glo_12042701a.pdf