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NGOs Petition EPA to Ban Powerful GHG from Use in Car Air Conditioning

Washington, DC, May 10, 2010 – As part of a worldwide campaign to eliminate climate damage from one of the six greenhouse gases included under the Kyoto Protocol, a trio of NGOs [petitioned](#) the US EPA last week to withdraw approval to use HFC-134a for mobile air conditioning installed in new cars. Use would still be allowed for servicing existing cars. NRDC took the lead on the petition, and was joined by the Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development (IGSD) and the Environmental Investigation Agency.

HFC-134a has a global warming potential (GWP) 1,400 times greater than CO₂. It was approved by EPA at a time when safer alternatives were not available, and fast action was need to replace an even more climate damaging chemical, CFC-12.

“Now that we have climate-safe alternatives, it’s time for EPA to get these dangerous HFCs off the market,” said Durwood Zaelke, President of IGSD.

“Reducing all HFCs can produce a Planet-saving 100 billion tonnes or more of CO₂-equivalent in climate mitigation,” added Zaelke. “We can get 30% of this by outlawing HFCs in mobile air conditioning, as the European Union is already doing, starting with new models in 2011. And we can do it fast—easily in 7 years for new cars as required in Europe, or in as little as three years if automakers get serious about improving their cars.”

Starting in 2006, Zaelke’s NGO, along with EIA and NRDC, has been leading a broader effort to strengthen climate protection under the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. For the past two years, their focus has been on using the Montreal Protocol to phase down HFCs.

A major milestone in the campaign was reached earlier this month, when the North American countries—the US, Mexico, and Canada—along with Micronesia, submitted formal proposals to the Montreal Protocol to phase down the upstream production and use of HFCs.

Last year, more than 40 countries supported action under the Montreal Protocol to reduce HFCs. This year, the North American countries and the growing island coalition are working to achieve a consensus among all 196 Parties to the Montreal Protocol, including China, which is the major producer of HFCs.

Alternatives to HFC-134a for mobile air conditioning include a soon-to-be approved HFO-1234yf, which has a GWP of 4, the already approved HFC-152a that has a GWP of ~140, as well as natural refrigerants such as hydrocarbons (GWP of 5) and CO₂ (GWP of 1).

Reversing approval for HFC-134a also likely would spur the development of other alternatives. For example, six low-GWP substitutes were announced by chemical companies just weeks after the European directive set the schedule for phasing out HFCs refrigerants from automobile air-conditioning.

The Montreal Protocol is already the world's best climate treaty, achieving direct climate mitigation of more than 200 billion tonnes of CO₂-equivalent (see [graph](#)).

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Petition: http://docs.nrdc.org/air/files/air_10050701a.pdf

For more information on HFCs and the Montreal Protocol, see:

Reducing abrupt climate change risk using the Montreal Protocol and other regulatory actions to complement cuts in CO₂ emissions, by Mario Molina, Durwood Zaelke, K. Madhava Sarma, Stephen O. Andersen, Veerabhadran Ramanathan, and Donald Kaniaru. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 2009.

<http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2009/10/09/0902568106.full.pdf+html>