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Switching Car Coolants Provides Fast Climate Benefits for US, World

Current HFC coolants are super greenhouse gases

Washington, DC 6 February 2013 - The US can use existing authority to help meet its pledge to reduce emissions by 17% below 2005 levels by 2020, although Congressional action will be needed to meet the steeper emission cuts needed to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. This is the conclusion of a report issued today by the World Resources Institute, [*Can the U.S. Get There From Here? Using Existing Federal Laws and State Action to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions.*](#)

The WRI report concludes that “Eliminating HFCs [hydrofluorocarbons] represents the biggest opportunity for GHG emissions reductions behind power plants” and recommends that the U.S. Administration reduce HFCs using both the Montreal Protocol and the Clean Air Act.

“The WRI report confirms our finding that phasing out HFCs, methane, and other short-lived climate pollutants are necessary though not sufficient for meeting both US and international climate targets, which in turn are needed to prevent runaway climate change,” said Durwood Zaelke, President of the Institute for Governance & Sustainable Development.

The US, along with Canada and Mexico, has proposed phasing down HFCs under the Montreal Protocol. In addition to support from US industry, more than 100 countries have shown support for the proposal, although China and India and a few remaining countries have yet to agree to launch formal negotiations on a phase down schedule.

“HFCs have been the fastest growing climate pollutant in the US, and phasing them down globally would provide the biggest single piece of climate mitigation available to the world today,” said Zaelke.

In the US, the biggest HFC target is the car market, where up to half of the HFCs are used in car air conditioning systems. General Motors is already shifting to climate-friendly alternatives and getting credit under the CAFE standards. GM is using a new car coolant from Honeywell and DuPont that has little impact on climate.

“The car sector can eliminate the current climate-damaging HFCs fast. The last coolant switch was done by US carmakers in three years (1990-1994), and protected both the stratospheric ozone layer and the climate system,” said Zaelke.

The US EPA is currently reviewing petitions from environmental groups to cancel approval for specific uses of HFCs, when there are clear alternatives, including for car air conditioners. The US EPA also is actively assisting the Climate & Clean Air Coalition to Reduce SLCPs with HFC projects, including organizing workshops to show that alternatives to HFC are already available in many sectors already, and many others will soon be commercialized.

WRI’s report is [here](#).