

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Retailers' Requirements- Regulation Concerning the Sale and Use of Small Containers of Automotive Refrigerant

Reducing Climate Change Emissions from Do-It-Yourself Automobile A/C Re-Charging

The California Air Resources Board (ARB) has adopted a regulation to reduce refrigerant emissions from the Do-It-Yourself servicing of motor vehicle air conditioners (MVAC) such as those in cars and pickup trucks. This regulation became law in the state of California on October 1, 2009.

What is the purpose of this regulation?

The purpose of the regulation is to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG). The current automotive refrigerant (R-134a) is a highly potent GHG. The global warming potential (GWP) of the refrigerant in a single 12-ounce container is equivalent to the carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from a typical California automobile driven over 1,000 miles. The regulation will help prevent unnecessary releases of the refrigerant to the atmosphere and applies to automotive refrigerants with a GWP value greater than 150. It applies to containers holding more than 2 ounces and less than 2 pounds of refrigerant by weight.

Who must comply with the regulation?

This regulation will affect retailers who sell the product, and companies that package, distribute, or market the small cans of refrigerant, and the consumers who recharge MVAC systems using this product.

What does the regulation require?

The regulation has four requirements. Manufacturers must:

- Install a self-sealing valve on all containers,
- Improve labeling instructions on the containers,
- Administer a recycling program for used containers, and
- Develop an education program that emphasizes best practices for vehicle recharging.

Although manufacturers will bear the majority of the responsibility for meeting the regulatory requirements, retailers play an important role in the recycling and education programs.

Retailers will:

- Collect the deposit at the time of product sale to the consumer,
- Return the deposit to the customer when the used container(s) are returned, and
- Store the returned, used containers for manufacturer pick-up and transport to the refrigerant recycling facilities. When the used cans are returned to the manufacturer, the retailer retrieves the deposit that was paid as part of the wholesale cost.

Manufacturers will provide retailers with educational brochures and placards. The placard informs consumers of environmental hazards associated with the refrigerant, where they can learn about proper recharging techniques, and a brief description of the deposit and recycle program. The retailers will make the brochures available to customers and display the placard. Finally, retailers must report sales and returned container data to the ARB upon request.

When does the regulation take effect?

The proposed regulation will take effect January 1, 2010. Automotive refrigerant in small containers manufactured before January 1, 2010 may be sold by retailers until December 31, 2010.

For More Information

The regulation and accompanying documents are available at www.arb.ca.gov/regact/2009/hfc09/hfc09.htm. For further information, contact Mr. Winston Potts, P.E., Research Division, ARB at wpotts@arb.ca.gov or phone (916) 323-2537.

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