

ENVIRONMENTAL, HEALTH AND SAFETY BULLETIN

Ontario

Ontario government program to reduce environmental toxins

On November 20, 2007, the Ontario government announced a new toxins-reduction strategy to minimize potential health threats caused by toxic chemicals. As part of the strategy, the government indicated that it will, first, appoint a panel of scientific and medical experts to determine which chemicals should be of immediate attention. Following this determination, the government plans to introduce legislation to reduce the use of these chemicals and to inform the public of toxic chemicals in the air, water, land and consumer products. Other initiatives that form part of the strategy include introducing legislation in spring 2008 to ban the cosmetic use of pesticides; issuing province-wide standards to reduce elevated lead levels in drinking water systems; and working with Cancer Care Ontario and the Ontario Medical Association to identify, target and reduce the number of cancer-causing agents released into the environment. For more information, please see www.ene.gov.on.ca/en/news/2007/112001.php.

Canada

Fuel-efficiency legislation brought into force

The federal *Motor Vehicle Fuel Consumption Standards Act* (the Act) recently came into force. Although the Act was originally passed in 1982, it was not brought into force earlier owing to a voluntary commitment by automobile manufacturers to produce vehicles that meet U.S. tailpipe emissions standards. The Act provides a framework for the federal government to regulate fuel consumption for certain vehicle classes. The government plans to set regulatory fuel consumption standards for light-duty road vehicles beginning in 2010, the year of expiry of the government's current Memorandum of Understanding with the Canadian automotive industry regarding the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from automobiles. The Act establishes fines for vehicle makers or importers whose "company average fuel consumption" (CAFC) levels (litres of fuel used per 100 km) are higher than the emissions standards set for a particular class of vehicles. Companies with CAFC levels lower than the prescribed standards for particular vehicle classes could earn credits, which they could use within three years to offset any penalties for exceeding the regulatory standards. For more information, please see www.tc.gc.ca/mediaroom/releases/nat/2007/07-h215e.htm.

Government of Canada establishes Lake Superior protected area

The federal government recently announced its intention to establish a national marine conservation area (NMCA) in northwestern Lake Superior. Encompassing 3,861 square miles, the proposed conservation area would consist of both protected zones and multiple-use areas in which activities such as commercial fishing and shipping could continue. Generally, exploration or exploitation of hydrocarbons, minerals, aggregates or other inorganic matter is prohibited in an NMCA, and disposing of substances in an NMCA is prohibited without a licence. For more information, please see pm.gc.ca/includes/send_friend_eMail_print.asp?URL=/eng/media.asp&id=1868&langFlg=e.

North America

Midwestern states and Canadian province sign greenhouse gas reduction strategy

On November 15, 2007, nine midwestern governors and the premier of Manitoba signed the Midwestern Greenhouse Gas Reduction Accord, a strategy to reduce GHG emissions in their jurisdictions

through energy efficiency, renewable energy and other initiatives. The accord contemplates a Climate Registry to enable tracking, management and crediting for entities that reduce GHG emissions; a market-based multisector cap-and-trade system to facilitate the trading of emissions credits; and other mechanisms to encourage further reductions. Within the next 12 months, the jurisdictions have committed to developing a cap-and-trade agreement and a model emissions trading regulation, which they plan to implement within 30 months. Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Kansas, South Dakota, Ohio, Wisconsin and Manitoba have signed the accord. For more information, please see www.midwesterngovernors.org/govenergynov.htm.

United States

New York State proposes new carbon dioxide emissions rules for power plants

New York State recently proposed new regulations to limit carbon dioxide emissions from power plants. The proposed rules, developed as part of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) – a regional effort among 10 northeastern states to regulate carbon dioxide emissions – will apply to coal, oil, and gas-fired electric power plants with a capacity of 25 megawatts or more. Beginning in 2009, these electricity generators will be required to purchase allowances to cover their emissions of carbon dioxide. New York will auction a total of 64.3 million tons of carbon dioxide allowances to generators between 2009 and 2011. The proposed regulations also require continuous emission monitoring of carbon dioxide emissions. Additionally, power plants will be able to engage in offset projects that will give them flexibility in meeting their limits. Examples of such offset projects include landfill gas recovery, reforestation and methane capture from farming facilities. The state will be receiving written comments on the proposed rules through March 2008. It will also hold public hearings on the carbon dioxide regulations throughout December 2007. For more information, please see www.rggi.org/ or www.dec.ny.gov/energy/rggi.html.

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