

FACTS ABOUT

Consumer Products and Air Pollution

Although California's air quality has steadily improved over the last 30 years, most residents still live in areas with unhealthy levels of smog. Reducing air pollution from cars and businesses has not been enough to meet state and federal air-quality standards.

Consumer products also contribute to air pollution. Every day millions of Californians use deodorants, hair spray, automotive-maintenance products, cleaning products, spray paint, insecticides, and many others - over half a billion units every year. All of these release compounds contribute to smog, including Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), Toxic Air Contaminants (TACs), and Greenhouse Gases (GHGs), must be reduced to protect public health, the environment and the state's economy.

- VOCs mix with other pollutants and with the energy from the sun create ozone and particulate matter. Both ozone and particulate matter are health threats that exacerbate cardiopulmonary diseases.
- TACs are compounds recognized by California as causing or contributing to increased number of deaths or serious illnesses, or posing hazards to human health.
- GHGs are compounds that contribute to global climate change. As part of California's effort to reduce its contribution of GHGs, the state has begun limiting their use in consumer products.

Today, California has standards for over 100 categories of consumer products. These standards have reduced their emissions by nearly 50 percent since 1990. However, California's population continues to grow and consequently the increasing sales are eroding the program's benefits. More work is needed and CARB is committed to meet the challenge.

Regulatory Process and Public Participation

The California Clean Air Act recognizes all chemically formulated products as contributing to air pollution and requires regulatory oversight. CARB, charged with reducing these emissions, uses an open regulatory process calling for participation by industry and the public. Maintaining a transparent process and seeking multiple perspectives assures achievement of the needed reductions while avoiding negative impacts.

Methods to Meet the Emissions Reduction Requirements

CARB surveys manufacturers for their current use of VOCs, TACs, GHGs and other chemicals. These data inform decisions on further efforts to reduce emissions and to update CARB's understanding of the sector's contribution to California's air pollution problem.

In California, most consumer-product emission limits are set as a percentage of VOCs by weight. Products subject to these limits and distributed for sale in California may not exceed these percentages.

CARB also considers reactivity based VOC limits. This alternative approach recognizes that not all VOCs create equal amounts of ozone. A reactivity based standard provides manufacturers needed flexibility. Limits based on this principle were developed for aerosol coatings, including spray paints. CARB considers this strategy for other categories on a case-by-case basis.

Commercial and Technological Feasibility

California's Clean Air Act dictates that ARB structure consumer-product regulations to be commercially and technologically feasible and not eliminate any product form. This means the cost of complying may not eliminate an industry's incentive to provide the product for sale and that limits must accommodate all forms such as liquid, pump spray, or aerosol. CARB strives to assist manufacturers' effort to use the most cost-effective methods to meet requirements.

For More Information

Visit the Consumer Products Program at www.arb.ca.gov/consprod/consprod.htm or call (916) 322-5350.

More information on Consumer Products Regulations can be found here: www.arb.ca.gov/consprod/regs/regs.htm.

To obtain this document in an alternative format or language please contact the ARB's Helpline at (800) 242-4450 or at helpline@arb.ca.gov. TTY/TDD/ Speech to Speech users may dial 711 for the California Relay Service.