

Greenpeace condemns EPA's Decision to Defer the CO2 Final Rule for MACs

Greenpeace is outraged at the EPA's decision to defer publication of the final rule approving use of CO2 in mobile air conditioning systems. Given that this rule has been under consideration for 2 years with many delays, such deferral can only be seen as biased and obstructionist behavior on the part of the EPA.

The EPA representative informed SAE's Alternative Refrigerant Symposium that the decision to defer indefinitely the use of CO2 in MACs in the United States was not based on the technical merit of the rule. At the same time, the EPA offered no further explanation for the decision. Given the lack of transparency on the part of the EPA, we assume that this decision was therefore made on politicized commercial basis.

We are outraged that the EPA is thus abandoning its mandate to protect the environment by being an objective arbiter of environmentally safe technologies. It is entirely unacceptable to delay this urgently needed rule without any adequate explanation.

We call on the EPA to show leadership on this important decision and enable automakers to develop and use CO2 air conditioning, the best proposed alternative refrigerant choice for MACs.

CO2 is a natural, non-toxic, low global warming potential refrigerant with superior cooling performance compared to R134a, a potent greenhouse gas now used in automobile air conditioning. CO2 has the potential to increase the efficiency of MAC systems, thereby reducing fuel consumption and tailpipe carbon emissions.

By switching to this natural refrigerant now, carmakers can avoid further costly and time-consuming shifts in the future. The chemical industry's proposed low GWP alternative to HFC-134a, that is HFO-1234yf, is not yet a proven entity. The chemical industry, with the support of the US EPA, is asking car manufacturers to delay taking environmentally responsible action today based on an unproven product.

Given the chemical industry's sorry record with CFCs and HCFCs, which severely damaged the ozone layer, and given the industry's sorry record in the significant contribution of its CFC, HCFC and HFC products to global warming, Greenpeace urges the car industry not to take the chemical's industry's promises at face value.

Greenpeace is very concerned that HFO-1234yf is being fast tracked for approval without adequate full life cycle environmental impact and toxicity testing. We demand that such thorough testing be conducted, and that the chemical industry demonstrates HFO-1234yf is safe for people and the environment.

We are further concerned that the high costs of HFO-1234yf will encourage developing countries to prolong the use of HFC-134a, or to revert back to HFC-134a upon servicing.

Greenpeace calls on car companies to make the responsible decision today and develop efficient, natural refrigerant MAC systems that will be a permanent replacement for F-gases. Now is the time to close the chapter on fluorinated refrigerants.

We therefore urge Congress to investigate the EPA's delay in approving CO2 MAC technology and address the issue of phasing out use of F-gases within any climate change legislation considered.

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