OZONEWs

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1- Diplomats Discuss Ways To Reduce Damage

Some 300 diplomats and experts are meeting in Geneva this week to consider measures to prevent further damage to the ozone layer, and prepare for the 12th Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, scheduled to be held in Burkina Faso in December. UN Environment Program Executive Director Klaus Toepfer said developed countries have made "impressive progress" in the past decade to phase out chemicals that destroy the ozone layer, including chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). But he pointed out that the long-lived substances already released will continue to weaken the stratospheric ozone layer for years to come. "For the next few years, the top priority for all governments will be to ensure that developing countries have the technological and financial capacity they need for moving to ozone-friendly chemicals," Toepfer said in a statement (<u>UNEP release</u>

<hr/><http://www.unep.org/Documents/Default.asp?DocumentID=150&ArticleID=2594>, 10 Jul). This week's meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group will consider new substances entering the market and ways to move away from CFC-based inhalers used by asthma sufferers, the UNEP said. The group will also discuss a proposal from the European Community to hasten developing countries' timeline for phasing out hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs). While they are a leading substitute for CFCs, they still deplete the ozone layer, the UNEP said. The UNEP maintains that the thinning ozone layer can recover but only if countries continue to seriously enforce the 1987 Montreal Protocol (<u>UN Newservice</u> <<u>http://www.un.org/News/dh/latest/page2.html></u>, 11 Jul). Under the protocol, governments have agreed to phase out chemicals that destroy the ozone layer, which is essential for shielding all life on Earth from damaging ultraviolet rays (UNEP release). 12 July 2000

2- Cuba Plans Campaign to Retire Antiquated Refrigerators

HAVANA, Cuba (CNN) -- Cubans are famous for their extraordinary ingenuity in keeping pre-revolutionary vintage cars running. The talent, though, is not confined to automobiles.

Cuban authorities calculate there are at least 500,000 old refrigerators still in use. The problem with them all is that they consume four times more energy than modern refrigerators, and they use freon gas, which is damaging the Earth's ozone layer.

That's why authorities here have announced a plan to retire the old refrigerators.

Source: http://www.cnn.com/cwc/WORLD/americas/story1.html 5 July 2000

3- The EU adopts a New Stricter Regulation on Ozone Depleting Substances

This new regulation was adopted by the Parliament on the 13 June 2000 and by the Council on the 20 June 2000. The new regulation enters into force from its date of publication in the Official Journal and applies from the 1 October 2000. Overall, the new regulation provides for a significant improvement for the ozone layer through a quicker elimination of all ozone depleting substances in the European Community than that agreed under the Montreal Protocol. The three main groups of provisions in the new regulation are:

Phaseout of all HCFCs. HCFCs are currently used in refrigeration and air-conditioning as blowing agents for insulating foams and as solvents. The regulation will advance the phaseout dates for production, consumption of HCFCs so that they will be well before those agreed under the Montreal Protocol. It will ban all HCFC use within the next 4 years except for the maintenance of existing equipment. Maintenance of existing equipment with virgin HCFCs will have to cease by 2010, while recycled substances may continue to be used until 2015.

Phaseout of the pesticide Methyl Bromide. The new regulation will introduce a slightly faster reduction schedule but the same phase out date than that of the Montreal Protocol for Methyl Bromide use in agriculture. It will also tighten a

potential loophole through a freeze and a mechanism for reduction of the use of Methyl Bromide for quarantine and preshipment purposes (still exempt under the Montreal Protocol).

Measures to minimise emissions of all ODS. Use and supply bans for substances whose production and importation has already been banned (notably CFCs which are still used in existing refrigeration and air-conditioning systems and halons in fire-fighting systems) will facilitate the control of illegal trade in these substances. More stringent requirements for handling of ODS including new staff training schemes, mandatory recovery and destruction and improved monitoring and licensing schemes of these substances should help in minimising emissions of all ODS prior to their final phaseout.

Source: http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/ozone/latest_news.htm 26 June 2000

4- EPA Finalizes Acceptability Decision on Halon Substitutes

An April 26 final rule issued by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) lists IG-100 and hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC) Blend E as acceptable halon substitutes, subject to certain use restrictions, in designated fire suppression and explosion protection applications (65 FR 24387).

According to the final rule, IG-100, which is 100 percent nitrogen, is acceptable as a Halon 1301 substitute in total flooding applications under certain conditions.

Total flooding agents are used to put out fires in enclosed spaces and to prevent explosions. IG-100 does this by decreasing the amount of oxygen in a protected area to a level that will not support combustion, according to EPA. To protect employees and workplace personnel who may be present in areas where IG-100 is discharged, the final rule imposes specific design requirements on IG-100 systems.

Under the rule, IG-100 systems should be designed to maintain an oxygen level of 10 percent. A system that can lower the level of oxygen below this threshold may be used only in normally unoccupied areas and in areas where anyone who could be exposed to the chemical can evacuate within 30 seconds, the final rule states. If it takes longer than one minute to clear an area, the IG-100 system must be designed to maintain an oxygen level of at least 12 percent. In addition, if the possibility exists for oxygen levels to drop below 10 percent, the final rule states that employees must be evacuated prior to oxygen depletion.

EPA's comments accompanying its listing decision state that IG-100 systems must include alarms and warning mechanisms. The agency also notes that workplace personnel and employees should not remain in or re-enter an area where an IG-100 system has been discharged without appropriate personal protective equipment. These comments are not part of EPA's regulatory decision, the preamble states. In many instances, however, the agency's comments refer to operating practices that already are identified in existing industry or building code standards, according to EPA.

The final rule also makes HCFC Blend E acceptable as a Halon 1211 substitute for streaming agents used in nonresidential applications. Streaming agents are used in fire extinguishers.

HCFC Blend E is made up of HCFC, hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) and an additive, the preamble states. EPA has determined that HCFC Blend E causes less harm to the environment than Halon 1211. The ozone-depletion potential (ODP) of the HCFC in this blend is 0.02, and all other constituents in the blend have a zero ODP, according to the preamble. However, due to potential health risks, the final rule limits the use of HCFC Blend E to nonresidential applications.

Upon combustion, halocarbon fire extinguishing agents, including HCFCs and HFCs, break down to form hazardous products that are potentially toxic to humans, according to EPA. Users should avoid breathing gases produced by thermal decomposition of HCFC Blend E and evacuate and ventilate the area immediately after using the agent, EPA warns.

Section 610(d) of the Clean Air Act (CAA) prohibits the sale and distribution of HCFCs in fire extinguishers for residential applications. EPA recommends that all extinguishers containing this blend bear a label indicating the risks associated with using the product and handling procedures to reduce those risks.

Under CAA Section 612 and EPA's Significant New Alternatives Policy program, the agency has the authority to "list a substitute as acceptable only under certain conditions or narrowed use limits." EPA's use restrictions are designed to protect worker safety in the absence of U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and other workplace limits. The agency does not intend to bar OSHA from regulating workplace safety with respect to fire protection, the preamble states. For additional information, contact EPA's Meg Victor at (202) 564-9193.

Source: Ozone Depleter Compliance Guide: http://www.thompson.com/tpg/enviro/ozon/ozonjune.html

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