



Environmental News

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EPA AND OMB WORKING TO SPEED THE REDUCTION OF POLLUTION FROM NONROAD DIESEL ENGINES

Contact: Joe Martyak 202-564-9828

In an unusual collaboration, the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Office of Air and Radiation of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today released the attached statement agreeing that curbing pollution from diesel-powered non-road vehicles and equipment should be a top environmental priority.

“Non-road engines emit significant amounts of fine particles and nitrogen oxides,” said John D. Graham, Administrator of OMB’s Information and Regulatory Affairs. “OMB and EPA share a concern that inhalation of fine particles is associated with a variety of adverse health effects. We are interested in addressing these critical issues and protecting Americans from the harmful health effects of diesel pollution.”

“I am pleased to begin this collaborative effort with the Office of Management and Budget to address one of the important sources of fine particulates and other pollution in most metropolitan areas,” said Jeff Holmstead, Assistant Administrator for EPA’s Office of Air and Radiation. “Other than the President’s Clear Skies Initiative for power plants, taking action to reduce non-road diesel emissions is probably the most important step we can take to improve air quality throughout the country.”

The proposal being developed will evaluate not only new emission control devices that would be required for new engines, but also the reductions in sulfur levels that are likely to be needed to enable the control systems to operate effectively. This comprehensive systems approach is similar to that taken for the heavy duty diesel highway rule for trucks and buses that takes effect in the 2006-2007 timeframe. EPA plans to publish a formal proposal for public comment early next year.

EPA will work closely with OMB and interested stakeholders in developing the non-road diesel rule. In particular, EPA will consult with state and local officials, diesel engine and equipment manufacturers, fuel refiners and marketers, public health experts and environmental organizations, as well as the Departments of Energy, Transportation and Agriculture. Analysis and decision making under this agreement will fully comply with both the Clean Air Act and Presidential Executive Order 12866 on regulatory planning and review.

OMB AND EPA AGREE ON NEED TO CURB POLLUTION FROM OFF-ROAD, DIESEL-POWERED VEHICLES

In an unusual collaboration, the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Office of Air and Radiation of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have agreed that curbing pollution from diesel-powered, non-road vehicles and equipment should be a top environmental priority of the Bush Administration. EPA has already been doing preliminary work on a rulemaking to reduce emissions from these sources, but the collaboration between OMB and EPA will allow the rulemaking effort to proceed on an expedited basis. This action will build on the recently reaffirmed EPA rule aimed at reducing pollution from on-road diesel-powered trucks and buses. It will also further the objectives of the Administration's recent Clear Skies Initiative, which is aimed at reducing similar pollutants from power plants.

OMB and EPA share a concern that inhalation of fine particles is associated with a variety of adverse health effects, including hospital admissions and premature mortality among patients with cardiopulmonary problems. For this reason, they believe that all significant sources of emissions that contribute to the formation of fine particulate matter (PM) need to be analyzed to determine whether regulatory action is appropriate. Although non-road diesel engines already are subject to regulation, they continue to represent an important and growing source of fine PM and other pollution in most metropolitan areas. There are currently several million of these engines in use in the U.S., primarily in the construction, mining, farm, and airport service sectors.

OMB and EPA also recognize that controlling exhaust from non-road diesel engines will likely require a lower-sulfur grade of fuel than is currently available. Refiners are already scheduled to begin producing such a low sulfur diesel fuel for on-highway applications in 2006. This is an expensive undertaking, and one that must be evaluated carefully in deciding whether and how to require additional desulfurization of diesel fuel. At the same time, refiners may benefit from the ability to plan for desulfurization of highway and non-road diesel supplies concurrently.

In light of the complex issues raised by this rulemaking, including the need to assure that the fuel supply is compatible with emissions control systems, EPA will work closely with OMB and other experts and interested stakeholders in developing the non-road diesel rule. In particular, the Agency will consult with state and local officials, diesel engine and equipment manufacturers, fuel refiners and marketers, public health experts and environmental organizations, as well as the Departments of Energy, Transportation and Agriculture.

EPA and OMB will also collaborate on the design of an innovative regulatory analysis to support the development of regulatory strategies to reduce emissions from non-road diesel engines. Among other things, this analysis will consider: (1) the use of incentives to encourage the early introduction of clean emission control technologies and low sulfur diesel fuel, (2) the potential use of market-based averaging, banking, and trading programs that might include permission to trade emission-reduction credits between off-road and highway engines, thereby stimulating more emission reduction at less cost; (3) the additional emission reduction benefits that can be achieved from existing off-road diesel engines through the use of very low sulfur diesel fuel; and (4) how risks, benefits and costs might vary by type of off-road engine and geographical location of use. Analysis and decision making under this agreement will fully comply with both the Clean Air Act and Presidential Executive Order 12866 on regulatory planning and review.

EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman will supervise this collaborative effort. She asked that day-to-day leadership be provided by Jeffrey Holmstead, Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and John D. Graham, Ph.D., Administrator, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget.