

EPA citizens' bulletin

U S ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY • WASHINGTON, D C. 20460

Joint Environmental Work With USSR Is Booming

Environmental specialists of the United States and the Soviet Union last year held more than 60 working meetings, ranging from individual visits to seminars and group tours of a dozen or more persons, EPA Administrator Russell Train announced last month in Moscow.

"A tremendous amount of mutually beneficial information was exchanged," Train told the third session of the two-nation joint committee on environmental protection. In the coming year, he said, the joint committee plans to accelerate the program of cooperative research and technology development.

The joint committee sets policy and oversees the operation of all working committees in various fields of pollution research and control, parks and wildlife, urban planning, climate, Arctic studies, and earthquakes. EPA is the leading agency on the U.S. side for many of these fields. Train and Dr. Yuri A. Izrael, head of the USSR Hydro-Meteorological Service, are co-chairmen of the joint committee.

The working committee on air pollution recently signed two "protocols" -- specific agreements for joint development work. Under one, a two-nation team will design "scrubbers" to remove sulfur oxides from stack gases of two 100-megawatt power plants to be built and paid for by the Soviet Union. The other protocol sets up negotiations that may result in allowing U.S. experts to evaluate a Soviet dry process for quenching coke.

Automakers to Be Quizzed on Fuel Economy Plans

If the nation's auto manufacturers apply -- as they are expected to do -- for a postponement of stricter pollution standards for 1977 models, they will be asked by EPA what they are doing to improve gas mileage.

The Clean Air Act provides that EPA may grant a one-year delay in the stricter emission standards scheduled for 1977. Public hearings would be held on such a request. EPA Administrator Russell E. Train said that, since fuel saving is a vital factor in judging the worth of pollution control, he would ask at the

hearings what automakers were doing to meet President Ford's goal of an average 40 percent increase in automotive miles per gallon by 1980.

"The auto companies have said they cannot meet the President's fuel economy goal without a freeze on safety and emission standards," Train said. "In the (expected) suspension hearings I intend to fully explore all the issues..."

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Train emphasized that only Congress can change the pollution reductions required by the law. He urged automakers to "make their case, as they see it, for a change in the law in a forum in which there is an opportunity for in-depth probing of their claims." He said he is sensitive to "the very real problems that the auto industry's condition poses for many workers and the economy as a whole."

Under the Clean Air Act manufacturers may ask -- after Jan. 1, 1975 -- for a one-year suspension of the scheduled 1977 limits on hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide in auto exhausts.

EPA Sets Rules on 'Significant Deterioration'

"Significant deterioration" of air quality where air is already cleaner than the Federal standards require was defined recently by EPA and regulations adopted to prevent it.

Under the new rules, proposed last August, all areas of the country will be divided by individual States into three classes, according to present air quality:

- * Class I - Pristine areas, like parks and wildernesses, where almost no change from present quality will be permitted.
- * Class II - Areas where moderate changes will be allowed, under definite constraints.
- * Class III - Areas where substantial industrial growth may be permitted, but not enough to bring pollution levels above the national limits.

The rules spell out how much added pollution -- in micrograms of particulates (smoke, dust, etc.) and in sulfur dioxide per cubic meter of air -- is considered significant for each class. States will decide which areas are in Class I and Class III, after public hearings and subject to EPA approval. Until they do so, all areas not already in violation of the national standards are put in Class II, "moderate" change allowed.

All plans for building new stationary sources of air pollution (power plants, smelters, etc.) in 18 different industries will be reviewed by the States. This review will augment the new-plant emission standards that already apply in 12 industries.

The new regulations "encourage, but do not dictate, State land-use decisions within a framework that supports the goal of clean air preservation," said Administrator Russell Train. EPA is "soliciting additional comment and will modify the regulations later, if workable procedures can be developed," he said.

Two-and-a-half years ago the Sierra Club won a law suit against EPA, requiring the Agency to set "significant deterioration" rules. A year later the Supreme Court upheld that decision.

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AEC Study and Impact Plans Found Deficient

EPA recently issued three critiques of Atomic Energy Commission actions. Reviewing an AEC power plant safety study and commenting on two environmental impact statements, the Agency:

- * Said AEC's estimates of possible casualties from an unlikely catastrophic accident were too low, that ten times as many people might be killed or injured;
- * Rated "inadequate" AEC's plans for handling highly radioactive wastes from nuclear power plants, particularly wastes containing plutonium and other manmade elements; and
- * Expressed reservations on AEC proposals to permit the use of plutonium-uranium mixtures in commercial reactors.

The reactor risk study, completed last summer at a cost of \$3 million under the leadership of Dr. Norman Rasmussen of MIT, tried to calculate the probabilities that accidents would occur in the 100 nuclear power plants expected to be operating in the U.S. in 1980 and to estimate their consequences.

AEC invited EPA to review the 14-volume study. The first phase of this review was completed recently by EPA's Office of Radiation Programs; the complete review will be finished in May.

The statistical methods of accident risk assessment won praise from EPA reviewers; "an innovative forward step," said Dr. William D. Rowe, deputy assistant administrator, in a letter accompanying the 33-page review.

But the Rasmussen study's assumptions of what might happen after an accident are dubious, said Rowe. In the worst case of a reactor meltdown and the release of large amounts of radioactivity, the human damages might be ten times as great as the study estimates.

The underestimate stems from two factors, he said: (1) Health effects of radiation exposure would be two to five times as great as AEC assumes. Rowe cited a study, made for EPA two years ago by the National Academy of Sciences, that takes long-term

effects into account. (2) AEC is "overly optimistic" in assuming that people could be evacuated from an exposure area. Such failure could double or quadruple fatalities and injuries. In combination, the two factors could multiply casualties by ten.

In their second critique, EPA's radiation experts said the Commission had concentrated on temporary storage of high-level wastes and the so-called "transuranic elements," like plutonium, rather than on permanent, safe disposal.

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"Although interim storage is reasonably treated" in the draft environmental impact statement, said Dr. Rowe, "the question of ultimate disposal is not... We recommend that the final statement concentrate on this aspect," rather than on construction of surface storage facilities from which the wastes will have to be retrieved later.

The third criticism said AEC had not provided enough technical information for adequate judgment of the environmental risks of using "mixed oxide" fuels in light-water-cooled power reactors. (Mixed oxide fuels would contain both uranium-235 and plutonium recycled from spent fuel rods.)

Such recycling of plutonium "appears at best to be marginally acceptable" from the cost-vs.-benefit standpoint, said Sheldon Meyers, Office of Federal Activities, in a letter accompanying a 46-page preliminary comment sent to AEC's Directorate of Licensing. Before reactor operators are permitted to use the mixed oxide fuels, Meyers said, AEC should (a) provide a better program of safeguards, (b) establish satisfactory rules for handling transuranic wastes, and (c) make accident analyses for specific reactor designs.

Risk-Benefit Study Set for Industrial Chemicals

The balance between risks and benefits of many kinds of industrial chemicals is being studied by the National Academy of Science under a \$100,000 contract with EPA. Results of the study, due in June, are expected to assist the Agency in deciding whether and how to regulate the use of such compounds, all of which are hazardous in some degree.

NAS experts are concentrating on substances whose uses have already been curtailed by government or industry, including persistent pesticides, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

A seminar for representatives of regulatory agencies, the chemical industry, and public interest groups launched the NAS study in September. Next month the Academy will hold a working session for panels of experts to combine and analyze the information

gathered. A public meeting to present preliminary findings is planned before the final report in June.

The study seeks to develop systematic methods for judging the costs and efforts of regulating environmentally harmful substances against the social benefits for which they were developed.

Briefly Noted

LAND USE COORDINATION -- EPA will soon establish a small policy office to coordinate programs related to the use of land and to improve its ties with State and local governments on land use matters. The new office will not launch and carry out "some great new thrust" by EPA, said Administrator Russell Train, but instead provide "clearer direction" to the Agency's existing authorities.

TWO PESTICIDES -- Intent to ban two pesticides -- heptachlor and chlordane -- for most uses was announced recently by EPA. These chlorinated hydrocarbon compounds have been found to produce cancer in experimental animals and to persist in soil, foods, wildlife, and human tissues. Actual cancellation may be delayed for public hearings held at the request of manufacturers.

VINYL CHLORIDE RECALL -- Pesticide officers in EPA's regional offices throughout the country have completed the recall from manufacturers, distributors, and retailers of spray-can pesticides in which vinyl chloride gas is used as the propellant. Inhalation of this gas, previously thought to be harmless, is now suspected of causing cancer.

EPA Enforcement Actions - Air Pollution

- * Region III, Philadelphia, reported that the Pennsylvania Electric Co. had signed consent orders Dec. 3, establishing compliance schedules for achieving control of sulfur oxide and particulate emissions from nine power plants.
- * Region IV, Atlanta, issued administrative orders Dec. 9, charging violation of standards for particulate emissions at eight power plants of the Tennessee Valley Authority in Kentucky, Alabama, and Tennessee.
- * Region V, Chicago, issued a notice of violation to the Jones & Laughlin Steel Co., Cleveland, Ohio, on Nov. 29, charging the firm with violating Ohio regulations for particulate matter and visible emissions.
- * Region V, Chicago, has begun the first criminal actions under the Clean Air Act's Section 112, which sets national standards for "hazardous" pollutants. (Asbestos, beryllium, and mercury have been so designated.) Four demolition contractors in Chi-

chicago are charged with knowingly violating regulations to control asbestos dust.

- * Region VI, Dallas, issued a notice Nov. 13 charging Ideal Basic Industries, Baton Rouge, La., with violating Louisiana regulations on particle emissions.
- * Region VII, Kansas City, reports the conviction of the Independent Stave Co., Lebanon, Mo., for violating an EPA administrative order requiring compliance with Missouri rules on particle emissions. Sentencing was deferred, but the company faces possible penalties, under Section 113 of the Clean Air Act, of nearly \$4 million.
- * Region IX, San Francisco, has served an administrative order on Texaco, Inc., Carson, Calif., charging violation of Los Angeles County's sulfur dioxide emission regulations.

EPA Enforcement Actions - Pesticides

- * Region I, Boston, assessed a civil penalty of \$4,650 against Sterling-Clark-Lurton Corp., Malden, Mass., for improper precautionary labeling on three wood preservatives, Penta Dip Clean Non-Staining, Creosote, and Penta Dip Redwood Stain.
- * Region II, New York, assessed a civil penalty of \$900 against Chemical Compounding Corp., Jersey City, for selling an adulterated and misbranded product, Central Vetsco Ridzall.
- * Region III, Philadelphia, assessed Misco Products Corp., Reading Pa., a civil penalty of \$2,000 for selling the misbranded and adulterated Quat Germicidal Cleaner.
- * Region IV, Atlanta, issued a stop-sale order to Parramore & Griffin Seed Co., Valdosta, Ga., halting distribution of a chemically deficient product, Pee Gee Malathion 5% Dust.
- * Region V, Chicago, issued three stop-sale orders: to Hawkins Chemical, Inc., Minneapolis, Minn., and Arrowhead Chemical, Inc., Superior, Wisc., both for a product, Zingo Sewer Cleaner, that was not registered and had improper caution statements on the label, and to Haviland Agricultural Chemicals Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., for a product, Haviland Malathion Dust No. 5, found to be chemically deficient.
- * Region VI, Dallas, assessed two civil penalties: \$3,200 against Thompson-Hayward Chemical Co., Houston, Texas, for shipment of the unregistered Biotrol XK Wettable Powder Biological Insect Control, and \$1,600 against Humco Laboratory, Inc., Texarkana, Texas, for selling the adulterated Chloroform and Benzene Mixture.
- * Region VII, Kansas City, civil penalty assessments include \$3,024 against PBI Gordan Corp., Kansas City, Kan., for dis-

tributing Vigoro Rose Flower and Shrub Spray, Acme Sevin 50W, and Acme 10% Chlordane Dust, all misbranded and bearing unacceptable claims; \$2,898 against James Varley and Sons, St. Louis, Mo., for the misbranded products, Harris Rust-Go Cleaner and Beaver Bug Out; and \$1,650 against A.I. Root Co., Council Bluffs, Iowa, for a falsified report.

- * Region VIII, Denver, has ordered Auto Chlor Systems, Inc., of Denver, to halt all sale of its Auto-Chlor Solution-CL, found to be adulterated and misbranded. The Region also assessed Lystads, Inc., Grand Forks, N.D., a civil penalty of \$1,200 for selling the misbranded and adulterated Sterisol Sanitizer.
- * Region IX, San Francisco, assessed two civil penalties: \$4,000 against Leffingwell Chemical Co., Los Angeles, for distributing Hi-Par and Nutra-Spray Basic Copper Carbonate, both with unacceptable claims and directions for use; and \$1,000 against Morgan-Gallagher, Inc., San Francisco, for distributing the misbranded and adulterated Acidso. The Region also issued a stop-sale order on two products of Grant Laboratories, Oakland, Calif., Grants Roach Control and Grants Fly Kill, both deficient in active ingredients.

EPA Actions in the Federal Register

Official action of all Federal agencies appear in the Federal Register, published each weekday by the Government Printing Office and available at most libraries. Single copies are sold by GPO (Washington, D.C. 20402) for 75 cents each; annual subscriptions \$45. Below are some of the 77 actions published Nov. 25 through Dec. 20.

November 25 - Revisions approved in air pollution compliance schedules for Kansas (pp.41177-80).

November 26 - Revised compliance dates for gasoline vapor recovery rules in eight States (pp. 14252-3); notice of intent to cancel registration of pesticides containing heptachlor and chlordane (pp.41298-300).

November 29 - List of 48 pesticides whose manufacturers claim priority in filing data on safety and efficacy before registration (pp. 41576-9).

December 3 - Guidelines for motor vehicle manufacturers to use in applying for one-year suspension of emission standards for 1977 models (pp. 41899-902).

December 4 - List of 64 pesticide applicants claiming supportive data priority (pp. 42022-4).

December 5 - Regulations adopted for defining and preventing significant deterioration of air quality in clean-air areas

(pp. 42509-17); revised regulations on liability of refiners of branded gasoline (pp.42356-61); one-year exemption granted to State of Maine to use Fenitrothion to control the spruce budworm (p. 42416).

December 6 - List of 41 pesticide applicants claiming supportive data priority (pp. 42714-6).

December 12 - Revisions in rules regarding availability of unleaded gasoline, particularly in rural counties (pp. 43281-9); revisions in air quality implementation plans for Arizona (p. 43277) and Kansas (pp. 43278-81).

December 16 - Withdrawal of a proposed rule setting Oregon water standards less stringent than neighboring States for dissolved gases (pp. 43557-8); list of 30 pesticide registration applicants claiming priority in filing supportive data (pp. 43579-80).

December 17 - Revisions proposed for air pollution control plans in Wyoming (p. 43639) and Puerto Rico (p.43640); 20 pesticide applicants claiming supportive data priority (pp.43655-6).

December 18 - Rules adopted setting policy and scheduling implementation plans for controlling salinity in the Colorado River (pp. 43721-3).

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