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U.S. EPA APPROVES CALIFORNIA RULE ON EMISSIONS FROM DRY CLEANERS

(San Francisco) -- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) today announced that it has approved California's regulation limiting emissions of perchloroethylene from dry cleaning operations as a substitute for the existing federal rule. The approval reduces the regulatory burden on California dry cleaners by eliminating dual requirements.

"This is an excellent example of how U.S. EPA and Cal/EPA can work together to streamline regulation while delivering the human health and environmental protections that the public expects," said David Howekamp, director of air and toxics for U.S. EPA's western regional office.

U.S. EPA's approval of California's regulation is the first such "rule substitution" in the country under the air toxics requirements of the Clean Air Act. U.S. EPA worked closely with California to ensure that the state's regulation would be shown to be at least as stringent as the federal rule. With the exception of certain large-scale operations, California dry cleaning facilities must simply comply with the state rule.

The federal Clean Air Act lists 189 hazardous air pollutants and requires U.S. EPA to establish national emission standards for all sources of those hazardous air pollutants. Among the listed pollutants is perchloroethylene (PCE, or perc), a probable human carcinogen and the predominant solvent used in dry cleaning. In September 1993, U.S. EPA promulgated the federal PCE air emissions regulation for dry cleaners.

When California promulgated its own dry cleaning regulation in June 1994, California dry cleaners using PCE became subject to both federal and state rules. To address this problem of dual regulation, the Clean Air Act allows U.S. EPA to approve a state regulation as a substitute for the otherwise applicable federal rule. U.S. EPA may approve a state rule that differs from the federal regulation so long as the state regulation is at least as stringent.

A notice of this action will soon appear in the Federal Register. The action will take effect 30 days after publication of the Federal Register notice.

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