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1990 Clean Air Act Amendment Summary: Title III

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Air Toxics

Toxic air pollutants are those pollutants which are hazardous to human health or the environment but are not specifically covered under another portion of the Clean Air Act. These pollutants are typically carcinogens, mutagens, and reproductive toxins. The Clean Air Act Amendments of 1977 failed to result in substantial reductions of the emissions of these very threatening substances. In fact, over the history of the air toxics program only seven pollutants have been regulated.

We know that the toxic air pollution problem is widespread. Information generated from The Superfund "Right to Know" rule (SARA Section 313) indicates that more than 2.7 billion pounds of toxic air pollutants are emitted annually in the United States. EPA studies indicate that exposure to such quantities of air toxics may result in 1000 to 3000 cancer deaths each year.

The Clean Air Act of 1990 offers a comprehensive plan for achieving significant reductions in emissions of hazardous air pollutants from major sources. Industry reports in 1987 suggest that an estimated 2.7 billion pounds of toxic air pollutants were emitted into the atmosphere, contributing to approximately 300-1500 cancer fatalities annually. The new law will improve EPA's ability to address this problem effectively and it will dramatically accelerate progress in controlling major toxic air pollutants.

The new law includes a list of 189 toxic air pollutants of which emissions must be reduced. EPA must publish a list of source categories that emit certain levels of these pollutants within one year after the new law is passed. The list of source categories must include: (1) major sources emitting 10 tons/year of any one, or 25 tons/year of any combination of those pollutants; and, (2) area sources (smaller sources, such as dry cleaners).

EPA then must issue "Maximum Achievable Control Technology" (MACT) standards for each listed source category

according to a prescribed schedule. These standards will be based on the best demonstrated control technology or practices within the regulated industry, and EPA must issue the standards for forty source categories within two years of passage of the new law. The remaining source categories will be controlled according to a schedule that ensures all controls will be achieved within 10 years of enactment. Companies that voluntarily reduce emissions according to certain conditions can get a six year extension from meeting the MACT requirements.

Eight years after MACT is installed on a source, EPA must examine the risk levels remaining at the regulated facilities and determine whether additional controls are necessary to reduce unacceptable residual risk.

The new law also establishes a Chemical Safety Board to investigate accidental releases of chemicals. Further, the new law requires EPA to issue regulations controlling air emissions from municipal, hospital and other commercial and industrial incinerators.

Full text, [Title III - General Provisions](#)

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