



He huarahi marohi ki te whakahaheke i te pānga o te haurehu kōwhai ki te taiao

Proposed measures to reduce the environmental impact of fluorinated gases

A snapshot of the consultation



Ministry for the
Environment
Manatū Mō Te Taiao



Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

F-gases and refrigerants

Fluorinated-gases (F-gases) are potent greenhouse gases which have a variety of uses. Although they are emitted in relatively small quantities, F-gases are believed to have a disproportionate impact on the climate due to their high global warming potential (GWP). They are estimated to make up about 2 per cent of Aotearoa New Zealand's annual greenhouse gas emissions.

Most F-gases used in Aotearoa are hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) used as refrigerant gases. Refrigerants are an important component of air conditioning and refrigeration technology. They are found in a variety of equipment such as heat pumps, dehumidifiers, refrigerators, freezers and vehicles. They also play vital roles in essential services by keeping temperature-sensitive goods (such as food products and medicines) cool for transport and storage.

The challenge

Reducing emissions from F-gases will reduce our impact on the climate and help New Zealand meet its emissions targets. However, F-gases play an important role in our modern world and cannot simply be phased out immediately.

To reduce our emissions we need to improve the way we handle and destroy refrigerants and look at areas where we can phase out the use of F-gases without impacting important industries.

This consultation

The proposed policies outlined in the [consultation document](#) aim to reduce the contribution of F-gases to New Zealand's greenhouse gas emissions, in recognition of the negative impact these substances have on our climate. The consultation document also has details of several previously announced policies that aim to reduce the unnecessary use of these gases and promote appropriate handling and disposal.

Refrigerant product stewardship

Product stewardship means people and businesses take responsibility for the lifecycle of their products, either voluntarily or in response to regulatory tools.

The challenge

New Zealand has an accredited voluntary product stewardship scheme for refrigerants called Refrigerant Recovery. Currently, producers do not have to participate in or financially contribute to schemes. Voluntary schemes have lower product recovery rates than regulated schemes, where all industry must participate.

Regulated product stewardship schemes can level the playing field and support the shift to a circular economy by:

- ▶ ensuring all producers, importers and retailers of a priority product play their part in a scheme
- ▶ requiring schemes to provide free collection of waste products to encourage reuse and renewal.

In July 2020, the Government opened the door to regulated product stewardship schemes by declaring six products, including refrigerants, as priority products under the Waste Minimisation Act 2008 (WMA).

Once a product is declared a priority, a stewardship scheme must be developed and accredited for that product. Regulation can be made to require producers, importers and retailers to comply with an accredited scheme for that priority product.

The new regulated scheme for refrigerants will build on the current voluntary product stewardship scheme and aim to improve the handling and disposal of refrigerant gases, and improved requirements for workplace competence.



Regulated Product Stewardship proposals

The Government proposes regulations to support effective implementation of priority product stewardship schemes under the WMA.



Regulation



Rationale

Participation obligation (WMA 22(1)(a))

Prohibit the sale of a priority product except in accordance with an accredited scheme under section 22(1)(a) of the WMA. This means producers, sellers and distributors of refrigerants would be required by law to act in accordance with an accredited scheme to be able to place their goods on the New Zealand market.

Without this regulation, participation in an accredited scheme is not enforceable. This regulation will establish a level playing field for industry and ensure producers take responsibility for mitigating the environmental impacts of their products.

Quality standards (WMA 23(1)(g) and (h))

Set a quality standard for end-of-life management of refrigerants and for reporting requirements. The standard will ensure best practice is followed for managing refrigerants to prevent harm.

Refrigerants require specialist management by trained people. This standard would reduce the risk of harm to the environment and human health.

Workforce competence (WMA 23(1)(b) and OLPA 11 and 16)

Workers would need to provide evidence of competence to work with equipment containing or designed to use refrigerants or to buy bulk or pre-charged refrigerants.

Most refrigerant emissions are due to leaks from poor installation and management of equipment. People will not be able to purchase replacement gases unless they can demonstrate suitable skills to prevent further leakage.

Import prohibitions on pre-charged equipment

Many of the products that use refrigerants are imported already containing the gases they need to operate. In 2021, around 45 per cent of the HFCs imported into New Zealand were contained in equipment.

As announced in the Government's first [emissions reduction plan](#), we are planning to prohibit the import and sale of equipment pre-charged with F-gas refrigerant.

Prohibiting the import and sale of pre-charged equipment will ensure the use of high-GWP refrigerants does not continue once alternatives are available. It will also avoid the need for people to immediately transition to lower-GWP alternatives. Users would be able to keep their old refrigeration systems until they reach their intended end of life but would have to buy low-GWP alternatives when replacing them. This would prevent New Zealand from becoming a dumping ground for equipment that has been phased out elsewhere.

Waiting to introduce prohibition until alternative gases are available will avoid jeopardizing those services that rely on refrigerants. Therefore, we are proposing a timeline for introducing restrictions that aligns with our best estimates of when alternative gases will be available for specific applications. This timeline can be found in the main consultation document and has been informed by external expertise, industry input and other government schemes. We are now seeking feedback from the wider public on feasibility of this timeline.



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Help reduce the impact of fluorinated gases

For full details on the proposals, the problems we are trying to solve and the options we have considered, read the [full consultation document](#).

You can provide a submission through [Citizen Space](#), our consultation hub, by either following the feedback form or by uploading your own written submission.

We would prefer that you don't email or post your submission to us as this makes our analysis more difficult. However, if you need to, mail your written submission to Hazardous Substances Policy, Ministry for the Environment, PO Box 10362, Wellington 6143 or email it to FGas@mfe.govt.nz.

Submissions close at 11.59pm on Sunday 18 December 2022.

What happens next

This consultation starts on 8 November 2022 and closes on 18 December 2022.

Proposals for refrigerant product stewardship

The Government will consider the submissions and may refine the proposals based on feedback received. Following consultation and further policy development, the regulations will likely be in force (subject to Cabinet decisions) in 2024.

Proposals for import prohibition on pre-charged equipment

The details of our prohibition timeline will be refined in response to the feedback we receive, and from working as needed with interested parties.

After consultation and further policy development, we will aim to implement the regulations by 2025.

