

Statement by Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management on EPA’s Action to Modernize Air Pollution Requirements for Wood Burning

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Boston, MA (February 4, 2015) – The Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management (NESCAUM) welcome today’s announcement by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to require modern pollution limits for wood burning devices.

“Reducing emissions and increasing efficiency with improved technologies is a win for the environment, the consumer, and the industry,” said Arthur Marin, NESCAUM Executive Director.

Wood is a fast growing source of heating fuel. In the Northeast, most states have seen about a 100% increase in wood heat use over the past decade.

In the U.S., residential wood combustion is the largest direct source of particulate matter (PM) nationwide (about 15% of total). Residential wood combustion is the largest or one of the largest sources of PM in many small northern cities and towns, and can range from 20%-75% of ambient PM levels in these locales.

Inhaling PM pollution can affect both your lungs and heart, causing serious health problems. Health risks include premature death in people with lung or heart disease, nonfatal heart attacks, aggravated asthma, and decreased lung function. Residential wood combustion creates health-damaging air pollution in locations where the public’s exposure is greatest – at home and in neighborhoods where people live.

The previous Residential Wood Burning Heaters New Source Performance Standard (NSPS) was over a quarter century old, having been adopted in 1988. It placed limits on indoor wood stoves and explicitly exempted other wood burning devices. In addition to the NSPS exemptions, the universe of residential wood burning sources has greatly expanded since 1988. Many types of devices now in the market have no emission limits under the 1988 NSPS.

The new standards will not only help better protect public health; they hold promise of expanding markets for manufacturers of cleaner devices. In Europe, for example, sales of cordwood stoves, furnaces, and boilers increased 100% and sales of pellet stoves, furnaces, and boilers increased 1500% after the adoption of stricter standards. More stringent emission standards can move wood combustion from a rural-based fuel to a widely used and accepted heating technology in more populated areas.

NESCAUM will be working with EPA, the states, and manufacturers to develop a more robust test method that can better ensure new wood burning devices will achieve the standards while in actual use, and not just in a laboratory test setting.

“EPA’s new wood burning standards are long overdue, thoughtfully crafted through extensive discussion with all stakeholders, and will serve the intended purpose of protecting public health and the environment without undue economic burdens on consumers or manufacturers,” said Mr. Marin.

About NESCAUM

NESCAUM is a nonprofit association of air quality agencies in the Northeast. Its Board of Directors consists of the air directors of the six New England states (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont), New Jersey, and New York. NESCAUM provides scientific, technical, analytical, and policy support to the air quality and climate programs of the eight northeast states, including assistance with the implementation of national environmental programs required under the Clean Air Act and other federal legislation.

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