

RCW 70A.60.030 Refrigerant management program—Rules—Fees. (1)

The department shall establish a refrigerant management program designed to reduce emissions of refrigerants, including regulated substances and their substitutes, from activities or equipment responsible for significant volumes of such emissions. The program must include, at minimum, larger stationary refrigeration systems and larger commercial air conditioning systems. The department must adopt rules to implement and enforce the requirements of this section. The department may require compliance with refrigerant management program requirements beginning no earlier than January 1, 2024, and no earlier than the adjournment of the regular legislative session following the submission of a report to the appropriate committees of the legislature by the department estimating leakage of refrigerants from existing systems in Washington, and estimating a statewide rate of leakage from the categories of systems that are subject to the refrigerant management program rules adopted by the department under this section.

(2) (a) The department shall exempt refrigeration and air conditioning equipment operations associated with de minimis emissions or with a de minimis charging capacity of less than 50 pounds in a single system from registration, reporting, and leak detection requirements established in this section. The department shall exempt from the requirements established in this section equipment that uses refrigerants with a global warming potential of less than 150 and that are not class I or class II substances.

(b) The department may scale the requirements adopted under this section based on the size of the equipment, the facility containing the equipment, or the business operations of a person responsible for such emissions. The department may establish delayed effective dates of requirements applicable to persons and systems associated with lower emissions of refrigerants than other persons and systems regulated under this section.

(3) Each year, the owner or operator of a stationary refrigeration system or air conditioning system that exceeds a de minimis charge capacity of 50 pounds must register with the department. The department must phase in system registration requirements under this subsection in order to prioritize systems with the largest charge capacity or greatest potential for refrigerant emissions. Registration with the department must, consistent with rules adopted by the department, include the submission of information about the refrigeration system, including equipment type, refrigerant charge capacity, and the type of refrigerant used.

(4) Prior to the sale of a registered refrigeration or air conditioning system, the owners or operators of the system must provide leak rate documentation to the prospective purchaser.

(5) The owner or operator of a registered stationary refrigeration system or air conditioning system must conduct periodic leak-detection inspections of the system. The department may require inspections to be conducted with relatively greater frequency for systems with larger volumes of refrigerants. The department may exempt systems that use refrigerants with low global warming potential or that have automatic leak-detection systems from the requirements of this subsection.

(6) The owner or operator of a registered stationary refrigeration or air conditioning system must inspect for leaks each time significant amounts of refrigerant are added to the system.

(7) The department must adopt rules that:

(a) Require refrigeration or air conditioning systems found to be leaking to be repaired within a specified amount of time;

(b) Require the retrofit, replacement, or retirement of a refrigeration or air conditioning system with a leak that is not capable of being repaired;

(c) Establish annual reporting requirements for owners or operators of refrigeration systems or air conditioning systems that include information about the system, including system service and leak repair conducted on the system over the preceding year, and information on the purchase and use of refrigerants in the covered system during the preceding year;

(d) Establish annual reporting requirement for refrigerant wholesalers, distributors, and reclaimers;

(e) Establish record retention requirements for operators of facilities and wholesalers, distributors, and reclaimers of refrigerants and substitutes;

(f) Apply leak rates and other regulatory thresholds that achieve greater emission reductions than the federal regulations adopted by the United States environmental protection agency, and that reflect levels of achievable superior performance established for the greenchill voluntary program implemented by the United States environmental protection agency; and

(g) To the maximum extent practicable while giving consideration to the goals of this chapter, establish recordkeeping and reporting requirements that are consistent with programs implemented by the federal environmental protection agency or in other states, and that minimize compliance costs and regulatory burdens for regulated parties.

(8) The department may adopt rules to establish:

(a) Service practices for stationary appliances, including both stationary refrigeration systems and air conditioning systems. Service practices established by the department may include requiring technicians certified under United States environmental protection agency standards to service refrigerant systems, requiring reporting and recordkeeping that identifies the technicians that have serviced appliances, prohibiting practices likely to result in releases to the environment, requiring all practicable efforts to recover refrigerants from covered systems, and prohibiting the addition of refrigerants to systems known to have a leak; and

(b) A process for wholesalers, distributors, reclaimers, and refrigeration and air conditioning equipment operators to apply to the department for an exemption from some or all of the requirements of this section. Exemptions may be granted by the department on the basis of economic hardship, natural disaster, or after considering a calculation of life-cycle greenhouse gas emissions associated with the granting of an exemption that will allow an identified leak to go unrepaired for a finite period of time.

(9) The department may determine, assess, and collect annual fees from the owners or operators of refrigeration and air conditioning systems regulated under this section in an amount sufficient to cover the direct and indirect costs of administering and enforcing the provisions of this section. All fees collected under this subsection must be deposited in the refrigerant emission management account created in RCW 70A.60.050.

(10) By December 1, 2029, and every five years thereafter, the department must consider the greenhouse gas emissions reductions

achieved under the program created in this section and the criteria of RCW 70A.60.040(3), and make a determination whether to continue to implement the program for the following five years. The department must notify the appropriate committees of the house of representatives and the senate of its determination. [2021 c 315 s 9.]