

# EPA sets pollution controls for boilers, incinerators

February 25 2011, By Renee Schoof

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The Environmental Protection Agency on Wednesday said new pollution controls for boilers and incinerators will save thousands of lives every year but at half the cost of an earlier proposal that industry and lawmakers had strongly criticized.

The boiler and incinerator rules, required under the Clean Air Act, will cut soot and toxic air emissions, such as mercury and lead. The [toxic pollutants](#) can lead to developmental disabilities in children, cancer and other diseases. Soot leads to heart and lung diseases.

The EPA estimates the standards will save as many as 6,600 lives each year, and also prevent 4,100 heart attacks and 42,000 asthma attacks annually. Industries and institutions will have until 2014 to install the pollution control equipment.

The EPA's top air official said the new rule requires the most [pollution controls](#) for coal-fired boilers, a small fraction of the nation's 200,000 boilers, but the biggest source of pollution. Most of the cost savings will come from reducing requirements for boilers that run on biomass.

Gina McCarthy, assistant administrator for the EPA's Office of Air and Radiation, said the health benefits will remain strong despite the changes to the original rule proposal.

"These are realistic, achievable and reasonable" standards, McCarthy said.

EPA estimated that every dollar industries spend on pollution controls would give the public \$10 to \$24 in health benefits from reductions of smog and soot. It didn't put a monetary value on reducing air toxins that can harm children's memory, IQ and learning ability.

EPA estimated the cost of installing and maintaining the equipment at \$1.4 billion a year for large sources and \$490 million for smaller ones.

The agency also estimated that the boiler standards would produce a net gain of 2,200 permanent jobs.

In addition to the boiler rules, the EPA set [emission standards](#) for waste incinerators at industrial and commercial facilities and [sewage sludge](#) incinerators.

EPA was under pressure from industries and members of Congress to revise the earlier proposal. McCarthy said information the agency collected during a comment period led to major changes.

Biomass plants, which burn wood chips or other plant material, will be required to install equipment that captures soot, but won't have to add expensive scrubbers. That's because biomass plants don't emit large amounts of the hazardous materials such as mercury that scrubbers are designed to collect, McCarthy said.

Coal-fired boilers will be required to add the extra equipment so that they control both soot and the toxic pollutants. About 1,000 of the 200,000 boilers covered by the rules run on coal.

One of the strongest opponents to the initial rule draft, the Council of Industrial Boiler Owners, said the final rule was an improvement but still "a terrible disappointment."

EPA plans to have another comment period because it made so many changes. The boiler owners council said it would suggest additional changes and called for a delay of the effective date.

The American Forest and Paper Association said that the final rules are an improvement, but still "fall short of what is ultimately needed to support jobs and the economy." It said that the rules would require investments in "already environmentally good-performing boilers" and called for a less costly plan.

The rules say that the smallest boilers, at places such as stores or churches, would be required to have annual tune-ups, but not to reduce emissions.

Boilers that run on natural gas are largely unaffected because they're not a large source of toxic air pollutants.

Citation: EPA sets pollution controls for boilers, incinerators (2011, February 25) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-02-epa-pollution-boilers-incinerators.html>

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