



Proposed Rules Seek to Cut Methane Emissions at Landfills

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EPA has issued a proposed rule and a supplemental proposal to a July 14, 2015 proposed rule that are designed to achieve additional reductions of landfill gas (LFG) and its components, including methane, by lowering the emissions threshold at which emission controls must be installed. This action is yet another step in the implementation of President Obama's June, 2013 Climate Change Plan. That Plan identified methane as a prime contributor to global warming, with municipal solid waste (MSW) landfills being one of its largest anthropogenic sources.

The proposed rule for existing landfills updates EPA's 1996 air emission guidelines and applies to MSW landfills that accepted waste after November 8, 1987, and that commenced construction, reconstruction, or modification before July 17, 2014. Once final, states are to implement the rule through revisions to their State Implementation Plan.

The focus of the proposed rule is on reduction of landfill gas (LFG) emissions, a term that is broadly defined to include greenhouse gases such as methane. The affected sources are not just facilities operated by municipalities and other local governments, but any "contiguous geographical space where household waste is placed in or on land," regardless of who operates the landfill.

Key components of the proposed rule for existing MSW landfills include the following:

- Reduction of the threshold non-methane emission levels triggering the need for a gas collection and control system from 50 to 34 megagrams/year (except for landfills closed before August 27, 2015);
- The use of Treated LFG would be expanded to include "vehicle fuels," production of high Btu gases, and raw material in chemical manufacturing;
- "Treated LFG" would be defined to allow treatment consistent with the proposed use of the gas and includes filtration, de-watering, and compressing;
- Emissions monitoring would be required at surface penetrations in existing landfills; and

- Wellhead operating requirements related to temperature and NO_x would be removed.

Comments on the proposed rule may be filed with EPA until October 26, 2015.

Separately, EPA issued a supplemental proposal regarding its New Source Performance Standard for new, reconstructed or modified MSW landfills. The proposal revises EPA's July 17, 2014 proposed rule for these landfills by reducing the threshold non-methane emission levels triggering the need for a gas collection and control system from 40 to 34 megagrams/year.

80 Fed. Reg. 52100 and 52162 (August 27, 2015)

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