
ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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Perchloroethylene Dry-Cleaning Facilities Required to Meet Federal Regulation

The Federal Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 require the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to regulate hazardous air pollutants that present, or may present, a threat to human health. Tetrachlorethylene, also known as tetrachloroethene, perchloroethylene or PERC, is the principal solvent used in the dry-cleaning industry, is a hazardous air pollutant. PERC is known to cause cancer in animals and is likely to be carcinogenic to humans. PERC also has other non-cancer health effects if concentrations are elevated and exposure is of sufficient duration. This further underscores the need to minimize emissions of this hazardous air pollutant.

The use of PERC for garment cleaning has steadily increased over the past four decades. Solvent emissions occur during the actual dry-cleaning process as well as from fugitive losses. Process emissions are due to vent loss during aeration, washer venting in transfer machines, and from stills and "muck cookers." Fugitive emissions occur with the transfer of "wet" garments, filter changes, equipment leaks, spills, water separators, and residual emissions from garments after they have been taken home.

In order to limit PERC emissions from dry-cleaning facilities, EPA established National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) for perchloroethylene dry cleaning facilities in 1993. All dry cleaning facilities using PERC are subject to the requirements of this regulation. The annual usage of the solvent and the type of equipment being used will dictate which of the requirements are applicable to a particular facility.

According to the State of New Hampshire Rules Governing Air Pollution, PERC emissions from a dry cleaning device may not exceed ambient air limits (AALs) set forth in Env-A 1400 Regulated Toxic Air Pollutants. If the AALs cannot be met, the dry cleaner is required to obtain a state operating permit.

If you have any questions concerning this regulation, please contact the N.H. Department of Environmental Services Air Resources Division at (603) 271-1370.