



# BMPs

## Best Management Practices for Motor Vehicle Recyclers

### Vehicle Refrigerants

Refrigerants used in vehicle air conditioners, including R-12 (Freon) used in older cars and R-134a used in newer cars, harm the earth's atmosphere when they escape into the air. R-12 belongs to a family of chemicals known as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). CFCs rise into the upper atmosphere where they destroy the ozone layer that protects the earth from high-energy ultraviolet radiation. Increased exposure to this radiation raises the risk of skin cancer and damages plants and animals. R-134a belongs to a family of chemicals known as hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) and is also known as a "greenhouse gas" because it contributes to global climate change.

It is important to manage refrigerants from end-of-life vehicles in a way that protects the environment. In fact, it is illegal to vent *any* refrigerant to the atmosphere. Instead, motor vehicle recyclers must evacuate refrigerants from end-of-life vehicles using

equipment that meets the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) requirements. In addition, refrigerants recovered from end-of-life vehicles must be stored in approved tanks, and shipped back to the manufacturer or an approved off-site reclamation facility, or used to recharge other vehicle air conditioning units.

#### **DID YOU KNOW?**

- Skin cancer is one of the fastest growing forms of cancer. In the U.S., one person dies of skin cancer every hour.
- Freon can only be sold to certified technicians or to certified reclamation facilities that will reclaim it to its original purity specifications.
- Although manufacturers were required to stop producing Freon by the end of 1995, they can continue to use it until existing supplies are depleted.

#### **Best Management Practices for Refrigerants**

- Before crushing vehicles, remove the refrigerants using labeled recycling / recovery equipment that meets EPA requirements. Provide a signed written statement to the crusher operator verifying the refrigerant has been removed as required.
- Do not vent refrigerants or allow them to evaporate to the atmosphere.
- Do not mix different types of refrigerants.
- Store refrigerants in tanks that meet U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) or Underwriters Laboratories (UL) standards.
- Label the tanks "REFRIGERANTS" and include the type, for example "R-12" or "R-134a."
- Label empty tanks "EMPTY."

- Write “EVACUATED” on each vehicle air conditioning unit when it is evacuated. Include the evacuation date for reference.
- Recycle refrigerant by using it at your salvage yard to recharge operating vehicle air conditioners or send it off-site to an EPA-certified technician for the same use. Alternatively, send it back to the manufacturer or to a reclamation facility that meets EPA standards.
- Keep all refrigerant purchase, sale, on-site recycling, and reclamation records for at least three years. Records of off-site reclamation should include the volume and final destination.
- Certify to EPA that you are using equipment that meets EPA standards. To obtain the appropriate certification form, call the EPA Stratospheric Ozone Information Hotline (1-800-296-1996).
- Do not use automobile air-conditioning recovery equipment to recover refrigerant from appliances. Appliances require a different type of recovery system.
- Do not use compressed air to test R-134a equipment. Some mixtures of air and R-134a are combustible at high pressure.
- If a customer buys a second-hand air conditioning system that uses R-12, suggest having the system retrofitted to use the preferred alternative, R-134a.
- For more information about managing refrigerants, call the EPA Stratospheric Ozone Information Hotline at 1-800-296-1996 or email [spdcomment@epa.gov](mailto:spdcomment@epa.gov).
- To report a violation or issue, please email [ODS-tips@epa.gov](mailto:ODS-tips@epa.gov).

***This guide sheet provides general guidance only.***

**For additional information, contact:**

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