

National spray paint rule could help reduce smog

Nov. 16 -- A new national regulation on aerosol spray paints will help to reduce smog-forming emissions.

As the first nationwide rule for aerosol spray paints, it limits emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which react with nitrogen oxides to form ground-level ozone, or smog, said Environmental Protection Agency spokeswoman Margot Perez-Sullivan. The new rule focuses on reducing the VOCs with the highest ozone-forming potential.

It includes paints such as clear coatings, nonflat coatings and primers. The EPA modeled the rule on the California Air Resources Board's regulation for aerosol coatings. Nearly 85 percent of the spray paints used in the country are produced by three companies, which already are meeting the board's requirements.

EPA officials allowed flexibility for paint producers, especially smaller ones that produce niche products, by allowing them to choose the VOCs they reduce, provided they meet emissions limits. Previous regulations focused on reducing the compounds by mass, without regard to their smog-forming potential.

The new requirements also apply to imported paint sold in the United States, which must meet the VOC limits by Jan. 1, 2009, the compliance date for the rule. Manufacturers that can demonstrate they produce aerosol paints containing less than 8.3 tons of VOCs annually are not covered by this regulation.