

COMSERVE

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BUILDINGS LEGISLATION UPDATE

IS THE R22 PHASE-OUT MAKING YOUR EQUIPMENT OBSOLETE?

The phasing out of HCFC gases (Ozone Depleting Substances) is beginning to have serious implications for users of Air Conditioning and Refrigeration equipment. We are already well into the timetable for the complete banning of these gases and there is evidence that if you have any equipment still using these materials, now is the time to start considering your options.

A little bit of history

Known variously as the Ozone Regulation and R22 Phase Out, EU Regulation 2037/2000 was implemented across all EU countries with the aim of eradicating the use of HCFC gases of which R22 is the most common.

The production of new R22 and other HCFC's has already fallen dramatically and will be stopped completely at the end of this year. The regulation also covers HCFC/HFC blends such as R403A, R403B and R408A and these will be covered by both the R22 and F-Gas regulations.

If you have a system containing more than 3Kg of HCFC gas, it must be checked annually for leakage by suitably qualified personnel.

What the future holds

From the end of this year the use of 'new' HCFC gas is banned so even if you have a stockpile you can't use it. You must use recycled or reclaimed material for keeping equipment operational.

Currently you can do this until the end of 2014 after which the gases will be banned and therefore any equipment using them must be replaced. However this date is due to be reviewed and may be brought forward reducing the time for any replacement programme.

There is no guarantee that there will be adequate supplies of recycled material to meet demand and it is almost certain that prices will escalate as supplies diminish.

It is already becoming difficult to get spare parts for affected equipment as manufacturers are reluctant to invest in stock that will soon be obsolete. You may soon find that essential equipment may not be able to be repaired.

What Should You Do?

The following recommendations are a combination of our experience and advice given by various sources including IOR, ACRIB and the Carbon Trust.

The most immediate requirement is that you identify any equipment that may be affected and how important it is to your company. We can help with this even if we currently do not maintain the equipment.

Your next step is to formulate a plan to either replace the equipment or convert it to use a new refrigerant. The consensus of industry opinion is that replacing current plant presents an opportunity to achieve long term efficiency benefits and reduce operating costs. Here are some points to consider.

Converting existing plant is the lower cost option but there are operational downsides. These include possible reduced efficiency and lower cooling capacity, some plant cannot be converted, plant life is not extended and therefore reliability may be a problem.

New plant can be designed to deliver optimum energy efficiency, which will reduce the payback period. It will also have a 20 -30 year operating life and not be susceptible to breakdown in the short term reducing operating costs.

New plant will be designed to meet both current and future cooling requirements rather than making do with the current arrangement.

New plant may qualify for one or both financial incentive schemes operated through the Carbon Trust. These are Enhanced Capital Allowances which offers significant cash flow in the first year and Interest Free Loans for small to medium enterprises.

Our website www.comserve.co.uk contains more information, downloads and useful links relating to this issue. There is also a wealth of information relating to other compliance subjects such as F-Gas and the Energy Performance of Building Directive (EPBD).

If you have any equipment that is affected by this regulation start planning now. We can advise the most cost-effective way forward and our Installation Division will ensure that any project will comply with all current legislative requirements.