

Incinerator Rule Update to Address Outdoor Wood-fired Boilers

Outdoor wood-fired boilers (OWBs) look like a small shed with a smoke stack. They have become more popular due to increases in the cost of oil and natural gas. They are also known as hydronic heaters, outdoor wood furnaces or water stoves.

The OWBs burn wood to heat water, which is piped underground to a nearby home or building providing heat for both the building and the building's water heater.

How does Ohio EPA propose to regulate OWBs?

To address concerns regarding emissions from burning non-traditional fuels in OWBs, Ohio EPA plans to amend its incinerator rules to include a definition for OWBs and require that owners of these units who burn non-traditional fuels be required to reduce pollution and odors just like owners of incinerators.

What will happen with OWB-specific regulations?

Ohio EPA has decided not to pursue a statewide "one-size-fits-all" rule at this time regulating OWBs as was released in draft form in February 2008. That draft rule generated considerable public feedback.

Upon further evaluation, Ohio EPA determined that the most efficient regulation of OWBs would be by individual communities based on localized conditions, such as population density, topography, distance between homes, etc.

However, Ohio EPA also recognizes the most significant concern with OWBs occurs when non-traditional, and often toxic, materials are burned; therefore, a statewide requirement for those who choose to burn these materials is warranted.

What type of fuel does Ohio EPA recommend be burned?

OWBs are designed by their manufacturers to use clean and dry firewood or a substitute that burns with similar or cleaner emissions (such as wood pellets). Some materials, when burned, can create dangerous emissions including excess toxic and particulate emissions that can be hazardous to human health.

What type of fuel is discouraged from being burned in an OWB?

Ohio EPA would require an OWB owner who chooses to burn the following materials to reduce the emissions and odors from the OWB:

- garbage;
- tires;
- rubber or plastic coated wire;
- materials containing plastic;
- materials containing rubber;
- creosote-impregnated waste materials;
- waste petroleum products;
- paint and paint thinners;
- chemicals;
- wall board;
- manure;
- animal carcasses; or
- asphalt products.

What happens if someone burns materials other than clean and dry firewood or a cleaner burning substance?

If those materials were burned in an OWB, the unit would become subject to incinerator rules, which require the unit's owner to obtain an operational permit from Ohio EPA, and demonstrate the OWB is meeting emissions limits through monitoring.

What role would Ohio EPA play in enforcing these regulations?

Ohio EPA, local health departments or local air agencies would investigate complaints received and determine whether the rules are being followed. The owner of the OWB could be required to obtain an incinerator permit if he/she chooses to burn materials other than clean and dry firewood or a substitute that burns with similar or cleaner emissions.

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Where can I get more information on newer cleaner-burning OWBs?

The technology for cleaner-burning OWBs is available and in use. Ten manufacturers of OWBs signed an agreement with U.S. EPA to manufacture models emitting no more than 0.6 pounds of particle pollution per million BTUs of heat input.

The cleaner OWBs are about 70 percent less polluting than older models. An orange hang tag and/or white hang tag that shows performance specifications can be found on the cleaner, certified models. Currently, several manufacturers have certified models on the market.

For a list of units recommended by U.S. EPA, please visit www.epa.gov/burnwise/approved.html.

How soon could the revised incinerator rules take effect?

Ohio EPA released the incinerator rule revisions for interested party review in April 2010, and is gathering questions and feedback from the public through April 22, 2010. It is common for Ohio EPA to make changes based on this input before it formally proposes rules.

When the rules are formally proposed, there will be another public comment period, public hearing and review by a legislative committee. This process will take several months.

How do I submit comments on the draft rules?

Written comments can be e-mailed to carolina.prado@epa.ohio.gov or mailed to:

Ohio EPA
Division of Air Pollution Control
P.O. Box 1049
Columbus, Ohio 43216-1049

All comments must be received by April 22, 2010. Ohio EPA will consider all comments before it formally proposes the rules.

How do I get more information?

The draft rule and links to other resources are available www.epa.ohio.gov/pic/outdoorwoodfiredboilers.aspx.

Hard copies of the draft rules are also available from Ohio EPA's Division of Air Pollution Control by calling (614) 644-2270, or writing to paul.braun@epa.ohio.gov.

U.S. EPA also has information about outdoor wood boilers and wood stoves at www.epa.gov/burnwise/.

Citizen questions:

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