



## Press Releases/Information Notes



### **Putting Out Fires without Halons: Standards and Codes of Practice Enable Developing Countries to Reduce Dependency on Ozone Depleting Halons**

Paris/Nairobi, October 2001 - Good practices can reduce bad halons! Halon consumption of about 30,000 ODP tonnes continues in developing countries for newly-installed non-critical fire extinguishers and systems, for reasons including: a lack of awareness of halons' impact on the environment; lack of awareness of national commitment to halon phase out; lack of regulatory structure; aggressive marketing of halons; improper servicing and maintenance practices; insufficient water supply; lack of information on available alternatives; and the sometimes prohibitive cost of imported alternatives. All of the above stimulate demand for new ("virgin") halons. Luckily, appropriate standards and codes of practice can be powerful tools to significantly reduce unnecessary emissions of halon into the atmosphere, promote the use of alternatives to halon, promote halon banking and recycling for essential uses, and promote an orderly phase out of halons - in time to meet the requirements of the Montreal Protocol.

The Paris-based UNEP DTIE OzonAction Programme and the Fire Protection Research Foundation in Boston, United States of America, have teamed up to help developing countries comply with the halon provisions of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. Their new joint publication, *Standards and Codes of Practice to Eliminate Dependency on Halons: Handbook of Good Practices in the Halon Sector*, explains the importance of standards and codes of practice in the phase out process and provides guidance on how to use those instruments to support the safe and timely transition to alternatives. The handbook is designed for National Ozone Units, governments and fire protection communities responsible for planning and implementing the Montreal Protocol halon provisions.

The handbook is based on the experience of both developed and developing countries, and includes input of key international experts involved with the halon phase out. It identifies the types of standards and codes of practice that are relevant to the Protocol and provides step-by-step guidance on how to establish new, or revise existing, standards and codes of practice to promote the halon phase out. It also explains where to get more information and assistance.

The Parties to the Montreal Protocol have agreed to follow a two-pronged strategy to achieve the halon phase out. First, they will use halons only in "critical" applications where alternative technologies are not available. This requires the efficient management and redeployment of the "banks" of existing halons. Second, they are deploying alternative systems and technologies to replace halons. The first element of the strategy requires the committed application of good practices, codes and standards. This publication assists developing countries in putting the first strategic element into place.

The handbook is part of UNEP's Eliminating Dependency on Halons series that supports developing country compliance with the Montreal Protocol. This publication, and the rest of the series, has been funded as part of UNEP's Work Programme under the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol.

In the interest of making this document widely accessible to those who need it, UNEP is also making it available free-of-charge at <http://www.uneptie.org/ozonaction>

This publication is part of the information exchange services provided by UNEP to developing countries to help them meet their obligations under the Montreal Protocol. The OzonAction Programme also provides other clearinghouse services (Training & Networking of ODS Officers) as well as assistance with the development of national ODS phase out strategies (Country Programmes) and Institutional Strengthening support.

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**Note to Journalists**

The stratospheric ozone layer protects life on Earth. In the 1980s the scientific community reached a consensus that the ozone layer is vulnerable to damage by atmospheric emissions of a specific family of industrial chemicals, the most notable being chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and the fire fighting agents halons (brominated fluorocarbons). In September 1987, nations concerned about this crisis signed the Montreal Protocol, a landmark environmental agreement that identified the major ozone-depleting substances (ODS) and established a timetable for their reduction ("phase out"). Today 175 countries have joined the treaty and committed to the phase out of ODS. Although they are highly effective fire fighting agents and explosion suppressants, halons are extremely potent ODS as well as significant global warming gases. The production and consumption of halons was successfully phased out in developed countries by the beginning of 1994. Developing countries ("Article 5 countries") have been given a longer phase-out period under the Montreal Protocol, and in January 2002 they will face their first important milestone: the freeze of their halon consumption at 1995-97 average levels. Developing countries currently consume about 35,000 ODP tonnes of halons annually. They will have to phase out all of this consumption plus production by 2010, except for essential uses.

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Standards and Codes of Practice to Eliminate Dependency on Halons:  
Handbook of Good Practices in the Halon Sector  
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