

Labeling Containers of HCFC Fire Suppression Agent

What you need to know



Background

All countries are phasing out ozone-depleting hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs). Production and consumption of all HCFCs in the United States is less than 0.5 percent of the historic U.S. baseline. Newly produced or imported HCFCs may only be used to service air-conditioning (AC), refrigeration, and fire suppression equipment that was manufactured before January 1, 2020. All U.S. production and import of HCFCs will end by 2030, with limited exceptions.

Can fire suppression blends that use HCFCs still be used?

Until 2030, HCFC-123 can be imported for making fire suppression agents to service existing equipment manufactured before January 1, 2020¹ (“old units”). HCFC-123 imported after January 1, 2020 cannot be used in the manufacture of new equipment or to service equipment manufactured after January 1, 2020 (“new units”). Fire suppression agent produced with HCFC-123 that is reclaimed or was imported prior to 2020 (“reclaimed” HCFC-123) may be used without restrictions.

EPA recently revised the labeling requirements for containers of fire suppression agent containing HCFC-123 to help determine when the HCFC-123 was imported.

Will enough HCFC-123 be available for use until the end of phaseout and beyond?

Up to 650 MT of HCFC-123 may be imported each year into the United States for use in old equipment in 2020-2022 and then decreasing, each year until the phaseout of HCFCs ends in 2030. Reclaimed material can still be used in any equipment. Reclaimed material may be available from appliances such as retired chillers and industrial process refrigeration equipment and can be stockpiled and used beyond the phaseout.

What is HCFC-123?

HCFC-123 is currently imported or reclaimed for use as a refrigerant and for the manufacture of a fire suppression agent used in handheld extinguishers, wheeled extinguishers, and aircraft rescue and firefighting (ARFF) vehicles in commercial, industrial, transportation, and military applications in the United States.



Use new HCFC-123 agent in old units, and reclaimed HCFC-123 agent in both old and new units.

¹ The only fire suppression agent containing HCFC-123 available in the United States is Halotron® I (also referred to as HCFC Blend B). This information is for factual purposes only, as EPA does not endorse products.

What must the label say on fire suppression containers?

EPA revised the requirements for labels on containers of HCFC-123 fire suppression agent to make them easier for users to understand.

The labels on containers of fire suppression agent made with newly imported HCFC-123 read:

WARNING: Contains HCFC-123, a substance that harms public health and environment by destroying ozone in the upper atmosphere. Use only for recharge of equipment manufactured before January 1, 2020.

The labels on containers of fire suppression agent made with reclaimed HCFC-123 read:

WARNING: Contains HCFC-123, a substance that harms public health and environment by destroying ozone in the upper atmosphere. For use in any equipment.

Where can technicians find the manufacture date for fire extinguishers and ARFF vehicles?

For fire extinguishers, the manufacture date should be on the manufacturer's label that normally includes UL® listing information. For ARFF vehicles, the manufacture date may be located on the lower right-hand corner of the windshield, floor, dashboard, or door jamb. For wheeled units, the Agency recommends inspecting the unit to locate the date also on the manufacturer's label that includes UL® information.



What is the industry doing?

The manufacturer has stated their intent to label their agent containing HCFC-123 imported after January 1, 2020 with multiple distinct, large, yellow striping (or equivalent). This is in contrast to their current bulk container which has two green stripes. Industry is also continuing to develop alternatives to fire suppression agent containing HCFCs.



Additional Resources

Updates to the HCFC Phaseout Program:

www.epa.gov/ods-phaseout/phaseout-class-ii-ozone-depleting-substances

Contact EPA: www.epa.gov/ods-phaseout/forms/contact-us-about-phaseout-ozone-depleting-substances