

limiting testing of C₃F₈ to that which is essential to meet safety or performance requirements; recovering C₃F₈ from the fire protection system in conjunction with testing or servicing; and destroying or recycling C₃F₈ for later use. EPA encourages manufacturers to develop aggressive product stewardship programs to help users avoid such unnecessary emissions.

(b) Sulfur Hexafluoride (SF₆). *SF₆ is acceptable for use as a discharge test agent in military uses and civilian aircraft uses only.* Sulfur Hexafluoride is a nonflammable, nontoxic gas which is colorless and odorless. With a density of approximately five times that of air, it is one of the heaviest known gases. SF₆ is relatively inert, and has an atmospheric lifetime of 3,200 years, with a 100-year, 500-year, and 1,000-year GWP of 16,500, 24,900 and 36,500 respectively.

This agent has been developed by the U.S. Navy as a test gas simulant in place of halon in new halon total flooding systems on ships which have been under construction prior to identification and qualification of substitute agents. Halon systems are no longer included in designs for new ships. The Navy estimates its annual usage to be less than 10,000 pounds annually, decreasing over time. Similarly, the airline industry has an interest in using SF₆ as a discharge test agent simulating Halon 1301 in aircraft system certification testing to ensure aircraft inflight fire safety. During the period of development, FAA certification, and implementation of suitable substitutes for aircraft, the airlines will continue to build new aircraft with halon systems. The amount of SF₆ released in developing and certifying these critical systems for commercial aircraft will be approximately 1,000 pounds per year or less. EPA believes that the quantities involved in these two use sectors are moderate, and avoiding the discharge of halon to test new halon systems is an immediate priority.

While SF₆ is not currently used in other commercial sector testing regimes, EPA is imposing a narrowed use limit to ensure that emissions of this agent remain minimal. The NFPA 12a and NFPA 2001 standards recommend that halon or other total flooding gases not be used in discharge testing, but that alternative methods of ensuring enclosure and piping integrity and system functioning be used. Alternative methods can often be used, such as the "door fan" test for enclosure integrity, UL 1058 testing to ensure system functioning, pneumatic test of installed piping, and a "puff" test to ensure

against internal blockages in the piping network. These stringent design and testing requirements have largely obviated the need to perform a discharge test for total flood systems containing either Halon 1301 or a substitute agent.

c. Unacceptable

(1) Total Flooding. (a) *HFC-32. HFC-32 is unacceptable as a total flooding agent.* HFC-32 has been determined to be flammable, with a large flammability range, and is therefore inappropriate as a halon substitute when used as a pure agent. This agent was proposed acceptable in the first SNAP proposed rulemaking (58 FR 28093, May 12, 1993) but public comment received indicated agreement about the flammability characteristics of this agent. EPA is not aware of any interest in commercializing this agent as a fire suppression agent.

IV. Administrative Requirements

A. Executive Order 12866

Under Executive Order 12866, (58 FR 51735; October 4, 1993) the Agency must determine whether the regulatory action is "significant" and therefore subject to OMB review and the requirements of the Executive Order. The Order defines "significant regulatory action" as one that is likely to result in a rule that may: (1) Have an annual effect on the economy of \$100 million or more or adversely affect in a material way the economy, a sector of the economy, productivity, competition, jobs, the environment, public health or safety, or State, local, or tribal governments or communities; (2) create a serious inconsistency or otherwise interfere with an action taken or planned by another agency; (3) materially alter the budgetary impact of entitlement, grants, user fees, or loan programs or the rights and obligations of recipients thereof; or (4) raise novel legal or policy issues arising out of legal mandates, the President's priorities, or the principles set forth in the "Executive Order."

Pursuant to the terms of Executive Order 12866, OMB notified EPA that it considers this a "significant regulatory action" within the meaning of the Executive Order and EPA submitted this action to OMB for review. Changes made in response to OMB suggestions or recommendations have been documented in the public record.

B. Unfunded Mandates Act

Section 202 of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 requires EPA to prepare a budgetary impact

statement before promulgating a rule that includes a Federal mandate that may result in expenditure by state, local, and tribal governments, in aggregate, or by the private sector, of \$100 million or more in any one year. Section 203 requires the Agency to establish a plan for obtaining input from and informing any small governments that may be significantly or uniquely affected by the rule. Section 205 requires that regulatory alternatives be considered before promulgating a rule for which a budgetary impact statement is prepared. The Agency must select the least costly, most cost-effective, or least burdensome alternative that achieves the rule's objectives, unless there is an explanation why this alternative is not selected or this alternative is inconsistent with law.

Because this final rule is estimated to result in the expenditure by State, local, and tribal governments or the private sector of less than \$100 million in any one year, the Agency has not prepared a budgetary impact statement or specifically addressed the selection of the least costly, most cost-effective, or least burdensome alternative. Because small governments will not be significantly or uniquely affected by this rule, the Agency is not required to develop a plan with regard to small governments. However, the rule has the net effect of reducing burden from part 82, Stratospheric Protection regulations, on regulated entities.

C. Regulatory Flexibility Act

The Regulatory Flexibility Act, 5 U.S.C. 604(a), applies to any rulemaking that is subject to public notice and comment requirements. The Act requires that a regulatory flexibility analysis be performed or the head of the Agency certifies that a rule will not have a significant economic effect on a substantial number of small entities, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 605(b).

The Agency believes that this final rule will not have a significant effect on a substantial number of small entities and has therefore concluded that a formal RFA is unnecessary. Because costs of the SNAP requirements as a whole are expected to be minor, the rule is unlikely to adversely affect businesses, particularly as the rule exempts small sectors and end-uses from reporting requirements and formal agency review. In fact, to the extent that information gathering is more expensive and time-consuming for small companies, this rule may well provide benefits for small businesses anxious to examine potential substitutes to any ozone-depleting class I and class II substances they may be using, by