

July 1, 1994

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Pollution Control Projects and New Source Review (NSR)
Applicability

FROM: John S. Seitz, Director
Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards (MD-10)

TO: Director, Air, Pesticides and Toxics
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Director, Air and Waste Management Division,
Region II
Director, Air, Radiation and Toxics Division,
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This memorandum and attachment address issues involving the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) NSR rules and guidance concerning the exclusion from major NSR of pollution control projects at existing sources. The attachment provides a full discussion of the issues and this policy, including illustrative examples.

For several years, EPA has had a policy of excluding certain pollution control projects from the NSR requirements of parts C and D of title I of the Clean Air Act (Act) on a case-by-case basis. In 1992, EPA adopted an explicit pollution control project exclusion for electric utility generating units [see 57 FR 32314 (the "WEPCO rule" or the "WEPCO rulemaking")]. At the time, EPA indicated that it would, in a subsequent rulemaking, consider adopting a formal pollution control project exclusion for other source categories [see 57 FR 32332]. In the interim, EPA stated that individual pollution control projects

involving source categories other than utilities could continue to be excluded from NSR by permitting authorities on a case-by-case basis [see 57 FR at 32320]. At this time, EPA expects to complete a rulemaking on a pollution control project exclusion for other source categories in early 1996. This memorandum and attachment provide interim guidance for permitting authorities on the approvability of these projects pending EPA's final action on a formal regulatory exclusion.

The attachment to this memorandum outlines in greater detail the type of projects that may qualify for a conditional exclusion from NSR as a pollution control project, the safeguards that are to be met, and the procedural steps that permitting authorities should follow in issuing an exclusion. Projects that do not meet these safeguards and procedural steps do not qualify for an exclusion from NSR under this policy. Pollution control projects potentially eligible for an exclusion (provided all applicable safeguards are met) include the installation of conventional or innovative emissions control equipment and projects undertaken to accommodate switching to an inherently less-polluting fuel, such as natural gas. Under this guidance, States may also exclude as pollution control projects some material and process changes (e.g., the switch to a less polluting coating, solvent, or refrigerant) and some other types of pollution prevention projects undertaken to reduce emissions of air pollutants subject to regulation under the Act.

The replacement of an existing emissions unit with a newer or different one (albeit more efficient and less polluting) or the reconstruction of an existing emissions unit does not qualify as a pollution control project. Furthermore, this guidance only applies to physical or operational changes whose primary function is the reduction of air pollutants subject to regulation under the Act at existing major sources. This policy does not apply to air pollution controls and emissions associated with a proposed new source. Similarly, the fabrication, manufacture or production of pollution control/prevention equipment and inherently less-polluting fuels or raw materials are not pollution control projects under this policy (e.g., a physical or operational change for the purpose of producing reformulated gasoline at a refinery is not a pollution control project).

It is EPA's experience that many bona fide pollution control projects are not subject to major NSR requirements for the simple reason that they result in a reduction in annual emissions at the source. In this way, these pollution control projects are outside major NSR coverage in accordance with the general rules for determining applicability of NSR to modifications at existing

sources. However, some pollution control projects could result in significant potential or actual increases of some pollutants. These latter projects comprise the subcategory of pollution control projects that can benefit from this guidance.

A pollution control project must be, on balance, "environmentally beneficial" to be eligible for an exclusion. Further, an environmentally-beneficial pollution control project may be excluded from otherwise applicable major NSR requirements only under conditions that ensure that the project will not cause or contribute to a violation of a national ambient air quality standard (NAAQS), prevention of significant deterioration (PSD) increment, or adversely affect visibility or other air quality related value (AQRV). In order to assure that air quality concerns with these projects are adequately addressed, there are two substantive and two procedural safeguards which are to be followed by permitting authorities reviewing projects proposed for exclusion.

First, the permitting authority must determine that the proposed pollution control project, after consideration of the reduction in the targeted pollutant and any collateral effects, will be environmentally beneficial. Second, nothing in this guidance authorizes any pollution control project which would cause or contribute to a violation of a NAAQS, or PSD increment, or adversely impact an AQRV in a class I area. Consequently, in addition to this "environmentally-beneficial" standard, the permitting authority must ensure that adverse collateral environmental impacts from the project are identified, minimized, and, where appropriate, mitigated. For example, the source or the State must secure offsetting reductions in the case of a project which will result in a significant increase in a nonattainment pollutant. Where a significant collateral increase in actual emissions is expected to result from a pollution control project, the permitting authority must also assess whether the increase could adversely affect any national ambient air quality standard, PSD increment, or class I AQRV.

In addition to these substantive safeguards, EPA is specifying two procedural safeguards which are to be followed. First, since the exclusion under this interim guidance is only available on a case-by-case basis, sources seeking exclusion from major NSR requirements prior to the forthcoming EPA rulemaking on a pollution control project exclusion must, before beginning construction, obtain a determination by the permitting authority that a proposed project qualifies for an exclusion from major NSR requirements as a pollution control project. Second, in considering this request, the permitting authority must afford the public an opportunity to review and comment on the source's

application for this exclusion. It is also important to note that any project excluded from major new source review as a pollution control project must still comply with all otherwise applicable requirements under the Act and the State implementation plan (SIP), including minor source permitting.

This guidance document does not supersede existing Federal or State regulations or approved SIP's. The policies set out in this memorandum and attachment are intended as guidance to be applied only prospectively (including those projects currently under evaluation for an exclusion) during the interim period until EPA takes action to revise its NSR rules, and do not represent final Agency action. This policy statement is not ripe for judicial review. Moreover, it is not intended, nor can it be relied upon, to create any rights enforceable by any party in litigation with the United States. Agency officials may decide to follow the guidance provided in this memorandum, or to act at variance with the guidance, based on an analysis of specific circumstances. The EPA also may change this guidance at any time without public notice. The EPA presently intends to address the matters discussed in this document in a forthcoming NSR rulemaking regarding proposed changes to the program resulting from the NSR Reform process and will take comment on these matters as part of that rulemaking.

As noted above, a detailed discussion of the types of projects potentially eligible for an exclusion from major NSR as a pollution control project, as well as the safeguards such projects must meet to qualify for the exclusion, is contained in the attachment to this memorandum. The Regional Offices should send this memorandum with the attachment to States within their jurisdiction. Questions concerning specific issues and cases should be directed to the appropriate EPA Regional Office. Regional Office staff may contact David Solomon, Chief, New Source Review Section, at (919) 541-5375, if they have any questions.

Attachment

cc: Air Branch Chief, Regions I-X
NSR Reform Subcommittee Members

Attachment

GUIDANCE ON EXCLUDING POLLUTION CONTROL PROJECTS FROM MAJOR NEW SOURCE REVIEW (NSR)

I. Purpose

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) presently expects to complete a rulemaking on an exclusion from major NSR for pollution control projects by early 1996. In the interim, certain types of projects (involving source categories other than utilities) may qualify on a case-by-case basis for an exclusion from major NSR as pollution control projects. Prior to EPA's final action on a regulatory exclusion, this attachment provides interim guidance for permitting authorities on the types of projects that may qualify on a case-by-case basis from major NSR as pollution control projects, including the substantive and procedural safeguards which apply.

II. Background

The NSR provisions of part C [prevention of significant deterioration (PSD)] and part D (nonattainment requirements) of title I of the Clean Air Act (Act) apply to both the construction of major new sources and the modification of existing major sources.¹ The modification provisions of the NSR programs in parts C and D are based on the broad definition of modification in section 111(a)(4) of the Act. That section contemplates a two-step test for determining whether activities at an existing major facility constitute a modification subject to new source requirements. In the first step, the reviewing authority determines whether a physical or operational change will occur. In the second step, the question is whether the physical or operational change will result in any increase in emissions of any regulated pollutant.

The definition of physical or operational change in section 111(a)(4) could, standing alone, encompass the most mundane activities at an industrial facility (even the repair or replacement of a single leaky pipe, or a insignificant change in the way that pipe is utilized). However, EPA has recognized that Congress did not intend to make every activity at a source subject to new source requirements under parts C and D. As a result, EPA has by regulation limited the reach of the modification provisions of parts C and D to only major modifications. Under NSR, a "major modification" is generally a

¹The EPA's NSR regulations for nonattainment areas are set forth at 40 CFR 51.165, 52.24 and part 51, Appendix S. The PSD program is set forth in 40 CFR 52.21 and 51.166.

physical change or change in the method of operation of a major stationary source which would result in a significant net emissions increase in the emissions of any regulated pollutant [see, e.g., 40 CFR 52.21(b)(2)(i)]. A "net emissions increase" is defined as the increase in "actual emissions" from the particular physical or operational change together with any other contemporaneous increases or decreases in actual emissions [see, e.g., 40 CFR 52.21(b)(3)(i)]. In order to trigger major new source review, the net emissions increase must exceed specified "significance" levels [see, e.g., 40 CFR 52.21(b)(2)(i) and 40 CFR 52.21(b)(23)]. The EPA has also adopted common-sense exclusions from the "physical or operational change" component of the definition of "major modification." For example, EPA's regulations contain exclusions for routine maintenance, repair, and replacement; for certain increases in the hours of operation or in the production rate; and for certain types of fuel switches [see, e.g., 40 CFR 52.21(b)(2)(iii)].

In the 1992 "WEPCO" rulemaking [57 FR 32314], EPA amended its PSD and nonattainment NSR regulations as they pertain to utilities by adding certain pollution control projects to the list of activities excluded from the definition of physical or operational changes. In taking that action, EPA stated it was largely formalizing an existing policy under which it had been excluding individual pollution control projects where it was found that the project "would be environmentally beneficial, taking into account ambient air quality" [57 FR at 32320; see also *id.*, n. 15].²

The EPA has provided exclusions for pollution control projects in the form of "no action assurances" prior to November 15, 1990 and nonapplicability determinations based on Act changes as of November 15, 1990 (1990 Amendments). Generally, these exclusions addressed clean coal technology projects and fuel switches at electric utilities.

Because the WEPCO rulemaking was directed at the utility industry which faced "massive industry-wide undertakings of pollution control projects" to comply with the acid rain provisions of the Act [57 FR 32314], EPA limited the types of projects eligible for the exclusion to add-on controls and fuel switches at utilities. Thus, pollution control projects under the WEPCO rule are defined as:

²This guidance pertains only to source categories other than electric utilities, and EPA does not intend for this guidance to affect the WEPCO rulemaking in any way.

any activity or project undertaken at an existing electric utility steam generating unit for purposes of reducing emissions from such unit. Such activities or projects are limited to:

(A) The installation of conventional or innovative pollution control technology, including but not limited to advanced flue gas desulfurization, sorbent injection for sulfur dioxide (SO₂) and nitrogen oxides (NO_x) controls and electrostatic precipitators;

(B) An activity or project to accommodate switching to a fuel which is less polluting than the fuel in use prior to the activity or project . . .

[40 CFR 51.165(a)(1)(xxv) (emphasis added)].

The definition also includes certain clean coal technology demonstration projects. Id.

The EPA built two safeguards into the exclusion in the rulemaking. First, a project that meets the definition of pollution control project will not qualify for the exclusion where the "reviewing authority determines that (the proposed project) renders the unit less environmentally beneficial . . ." [see, e.g., 51.165(a)(1)(v)(C)(8)]. In the WEPCO rule, EPA did not provide any specific definition of the environmentally-beneficial standard, although it did indicate that the pollution control project provision "provides for a case-by-case assessment of the pollution control project's net emissions and overall impact on the environment" [57 FR 32321]. This provision is buttressed by a second safeguard that directs permitting authorities to evaluate the air quality impacts of pollution control projects that could--through collateral emissions increases or changes in utilization patterns--adversely impact local air quality [see 57 FR 32322]. This provision generally authorizes, as appropriate, a permitting authority to require modelling of emissions increases associated with a pollution control project. Id. More fundamentally, it explicitly states that no pollution control project under any circumstances may cause or contribute to violation of a national ambient air

quality standard (NAAQS), PSD increment, or air quality related value (AQRV) in a class I area. Id.³

As noted, the WEPCO rulemaking was expressly limited to existing electric utility steam generating units [see, e.g., 40 CFR 51.165(a)(1)(v)(C)(8) and 51.165(a)(1)(xx)]. The EPA limited the rulemaking to utilities because of the impending acid rain requirements under title IV of the Act, EPA's extensive experience with new source applicability issues for electric utilities, the general similarity of equipment, and the public availability of utility operating projections. The EPA indicated it would consider adopting a formal NSR pollution control project exclusion for other source categories as part of a separate NSR rulemaking. The rulemaking in question is now expected to be finalized by early 1996. On the other hand, the WEPCO rulemaking also noted that EPA's existing policy was, and would continue to be, to allow permitting authorities to exclude pollution control projects in other source categories on a case-by-case basis.

III. Case-By-Case Pollution Control Project Determinations

The following sections describe the type of projects that may be considered by permitting authorities for exclusion from major NSR as pollution control projects and two safeguards that permitting authorities are to use in evaluating such projects--the environmentally-beneficial test and an air quality impact assessment. To a large extent, these requirements are drawn from the WEPCO rulemaking. However, because the WEPCO rule was designed for a single source category, electric utilities, it cannot and does not serve as a complete template for this

³The WEPCO rule refers specifically to "visibility limitation" rather than "air quality related values." However, EPA clearly stated in the preamble to the final rule that permitting agencies have the authority to "solicit the views of others in taking any other appropriate remedial steps deemed necessary to protect class I areas. . . . The EPA emphasizes that all environmental impacts, including those on class I areas, can be considered. . . ." [57 FR 32322]. Further, the statutory protections in section 165(d) plainly are intended to protect against any "adverse impact on the AQRV of such [class I] lands (including visibility)." Based on this statutory provision, EPA believes that the proper focus of any air quality assessment for a pollution control project should be on visibility and any other relevant AQRV's for any class I areas that may be affected by the proposed project. Permitting authorities should notify Federal Land Managers where appropriate concerning pollution control projects which may adversely affect AQRV's in class I areas.

guidance. Therefore, the following descriptions expand upon the WEPCO rule in the scope of qualifying projects and in the specific elements inherent in the safeguards. These changes reflect the far more complicated task of evaluating pollution control projects at a wide variety of sources facing a myriad of Federal, State, and local clean air requirements.

Since the safeguards are an integral component of the exclusion, States must have the authority to impose the safeguards in approving an exclusion from major NSR under this policy. Thus, State or local permitting authorities in order to use this policy should provide statements to EPA describing and affirming the basis for its authority to impose these safeguards absent major NSR. Sources that obtain exclusions from permitting authorities that have not provided this affirmation of authority are at risk in seeking to rely on the exclusion issued by the permitting agency, because EPA may subsequently determine that the project does not qualify as a pollution control project under this policy.

A. Types of Projects Covered

1. Add-On Controls and Fuel Switches

In the WEPCO rulemaking, EPA found that both add-on emissions control projects and fuel switches to less-polluting fuels could be considered to be pollution control projects. For the purposes of today's guidance, EPA affirms that these types of projects are appropriate candidates for a case-by-case exclusion as well. These types of projects include:

- the installation of conventional and advanced flue gas desulfurization and sorbent injection for SO₂;
- electrostatic precipitators, baghouses, high efficiency multiclones, and scrubbers for particulate or other pollutants;
- flue gas recirculation, low-NO_x burners, selective non-catalytic reduction and selective catalytic reduction for NO_x; and
- regenerative thermal oxidizers (RTO), catalytic oxidizers, condensers, thermal incinerators, flares and carbon adsorbers for volatile organic compounds (VOC) and toxic air pollutants.

Projects undertaken to accommodate switching to an inherently less-polluting fuel such as natural gas can also

qualify for the exclusion. Any activity that is necessary to accommodate switching to a inherently less-polluting fuel is considered to be part of the pollution control project. In some instances, where the emissions unit's capability would otherwise be impaired as a result of the fuel switch, this may involve certain necessary changes to the pollution generating equipment (e.g., boiler) in order to maintain the normal operating capability of the unit at the time of the project.

2. Pollution Prevention Projects

It is EPA's policy to promote pollution prevention approaches and to remove regulatory barriers to sources seeking to develop and implement pollution prevention solutions to the extent allowed under the Act. For this reason, permitting authorities may also apply this exclusion to switches to inherently less-polluting raw materials and processes and certain other types of "pollution prevention" projects.⁴ For instance, many VOC users will be making switches to water-based or powder-paint application systems as a strategy for meeting reasonably available control technology (RACT) or switching to a non-toxic VOC to comply with maximum achievable control technology (MACT) requirements.

Accordingly, under today's guidance, permitting authorities may consider excluding raw material substitutions, process changes and other pollution prevention strategies where the pollution control aspects of the project are clearly evident and will result in substantial emissions reductions per unit of output for one or more pollutants. In judging whether a pollution prevention project can be considered for exclusion as a pollution control project, permitting authorities may also consider as a relevant factor whether a project is being undertaken to bring a source into compliance with a MACT, RACT, or other Act requirement.

⁴For purposes of this guidance, pollution prevention means any activity that through process changes, product reformulation or redesign, or substitution of less polluting raw materials, eliminates or reduces the release of air pollutants and other pollutants to the environment (including fugitive emissions) prior to recycling, treatment, or disposal; it does not mean recycling (other than certain "in-process recycling" practices), energy recovery, treatment, or disposal [see Pollution Prevention Act of 1990 section 6602(b) and section 6603(5)(A) and (B); see also "EPA Definition of 'Pollution Prevention,'" memorandum from F. Henry Habicht II, May 28, 1992].

Although EPA is supportive of pollution control and prevention projects and strategies, special care must be taken in classifying a project as a pollution control project and in evaluating a project under a pollution control project exclusion. Virtually every modernization or upgrade project at an existing industrial facility which reduces inputs and lowers unit costs has the concurrent effect of lowering an emissions rate per unit of fuel, raw material or output. Nevertheless, it is clear that these major capital investments in industrial equipment are the very types of projects that Congress intended to address in the new source modification provisions [see Wisconsin Electric Power Co. v. Reilly, 893 F.2d 901, 907-10 (7th Cir. 1990) (rejecting contention that utility life extension project was not a physical or operational change); Puerto Rican Cement Co., Inc. v. EPA, 889 F.2d 292, 296-98 (1st Cir. 1989) (NSR applies to modernization project that decreases emissions per unit of output, but increases economic efficiency such that utilization may increase and result in net increase in actual emissions)]. Likewise, the replacement of an existing emissions unit with a newer or different one (albeit more efficient and less polluting) or the reconstruction of an existing emissions unit would not qualify as a pollution control project. Adopting a policy that automatically excludes from NSR any project that, while lowering operating costs or improving performance, coincidentally lowers a unit's emissions rate, would improperly exclude almost all modifications to existing emissions units, including those that are likely to increase utilization and therefore result in overall higher levels of emissions.

In order to limit this exclusion to the subset of pollution prevention projects that will in fact lower annual emissions at a source, permitting authorities should not exclude as pollution control projects any pollution prevention project that can be reasonably expected to result in an increase in the utilization of the affected emissions unit(s). For example, projects which significantly increase capacity, decrease production costs, or improve product marketability can be expected to affect utilization patterns. With these changes, the environment may or may not see a reduction in overall source emissions; it depends on the source's operations after the change, which cannot be predicted with any certainty.⁵ This is not to say that these

⁵This is in marked contrast to the addition of pollution control equipment which typically does not, in EPA's experience, result in any increase in the source's utilization of the emission unit in question. In the few instances where this presumption is not true, the safeguards discussed in the next section should provide adequate environmental protections for

types of projects are necessarily subject to major NSR requirements, only that they should not be excluded as pollution control projects under this guidance. The EPA may consider different approaches to excluding pollution prevention projects from major NSR requirements in the upcoming NSR rulemaking. Under this guidance, however, permitting authorities should carefully review proposed pollution prevention projects to evaluate whether utilization of the source will increase as a result of the project.

Furthermore, permitting authorities should have the authority to monitor utilization of an affected emissions unit or source for a reasonable period of time subsequent to the project to verify what effect, if any, the project has on utilization. In cases where the project has clearly caused an increase in utilization, the permitting authority may need to reevaluate the basis for the original exclusion to verify that an exclusion is still appropriate and to ensure that all applicable safeguards are being met.

B. Safeguards

The following safeguards are necessary to assure that projects being considered for an exclusion qualify as environmentally beneficial pollution control projects and do not have air quality impacts which would preclude the exclusion. Consequently, a project that does not meet these safeguards does not qualify for an exclusion under this policy.

1. Environmentally-Beneficial Test

Projects that meet the definition of a pollution control project outlined above may nonetheless cause collateral emissions increases or have other adverse impacts. For instance, a large VOC incinerator, while substantially eliminating VOC emissions, may generate sizeable NO_x emissions well in excess of significance levels. To protect against these sorts of problems, EPA in the WEPCO rule provided for an assessment of the overall environmental impact of a project and the specific impact, if any, on air quality. The EPA believes that this safeguard is appropriate in this policy as well.

Unless information regarding a specific case indicates otherwise, the types of pollution control projects listed in III. A. 1. above can be presumed, by their nature, to be environmentally beneficial. This presumption arises from EPA's

these additions of pollution control equipment.

experience that historically these are the very types of pollution controls applied to new and modified emissions units. The presumption does not apply, however, where there is reason to believe that 1) the controls will not be designed, operated or maintained in a manner consistent with standard and reasonable practices; or 2) collateral emissions increases have not been adequately addressed as discussed below.

In making a determination as to whether a project is environmentally beneficial, the permitting authority must consider the types and quantity of air pollutants emitted before and after the project, as well as other relevant environmental factors. While because of the case-by-case nature of projects it is not possible to list all factors which should be considered in any particular case, several concerns can be noted.

First, pollution control projects which result in an increase in non-targeted pollutants should be reviewed to determine that the collateral increase has been minimized and will not result in environmental harm. Minimization here does not mean that the permitting agency should conduct a BACT-type review or necessarily prescribe add-on control equipment to treat the collateral increase. Rather, minimization means that, within the physical configuration and operational standards usually associated with such a control device or strategy, the source has taken reasonable measures to keep any collateral increase to a minimum. For instance, the permitting authority could require that a low-NO_x burner project be subject to temperature and other appropriate combustion standards so that carbon monoxide (CO) emissions are kept to a minimum, but would not review the project for a CO catalyst or other add-on type options. In addition, a State's RACT or MACT rule may have explicitly considered measures for minimizing a collateral increase for a class or category of pollution control projects and requires a standard of best practices to minimize such collateral increases. In such cases, the need to minimize collateral increase from the covered class or category of pollution control projects can be presumed to have been adequately addressed in the rule.

In addition, a project which would result in an unacceptable increased risk due to the release of air toxics should not be considered environmentally beneficial. It is EPA's experience, however, that most projects undertaken to reduce emissions, especially add-on controls and fuel switches, result in concurrent reductions in air toxics. The EPA expects that many pollution control projects seeking an exclusion under this guidance will be for the purpose of complying with MACT requirements for reductions in air toxics. Consequently, unless

there is reason to believe otherwise, permitting agencies may presume that such projects by their nature will result in reduced risks from air toxics.

2. Additional Air Quality Impacts Assessments

(a) General

Nothing in the Act or EPA's implementing regulations would allow a permitting authority to approve a pollution control project resulting in an emissions increase that would cause or contribute to a violation of a NAAQS or PSD increment, or adversely impact visibility or other AQRV in a class I area [see, e.g., Act sections 110(a)(2)(C), 165, 169A(b), 173]. Accordingly, this guidance is not intended to allow any project to violate any of these air quality standards.

As discussed above, it is possible that a pollution control project--either through an increase in an emissions rate of a collateral pollutant or through a change in utilization--will cause an increase in actual emissions, which in turn could cause or contribute to a violation of a NAAQS or increment or adversely impact AQRV's. For this reason, in the WEPCO rule the EPA required sources to address whenever 1) the proposed change would result in a significant net increase in actual emissions of any criteria pollutant over levels used for that source in the most recent air quality impact analysis; and 2) the permitting authority has reason to believe that such an increase would cause or contribute to a violation of a NAAQS, increment or visibility limitation. If an air quality impact analysis indicates that the increase in emissions will cause or contribute to a violation of any ambient standard, PSD increment, or AQRV, the pollution control exclusion does not apply.

The EPA believes that this safeguard needs to be applied here as well. Thus, where a pollution control project will result in a significant increase in emissions and that increased level has not been previously analyzed for its air quality impact and raises the possibility of a NAAQS, increment, or AQRV violation, the permitting authority is to require the source to provide an air quality analysis sufficient to demonstrate the impact of the project. The EPA will not necessarily require that the increase be modeled, but the source must provide sufficient data to satisfy the permitting authority that the new levels of emissions will not cause a NAAQS or increment violation and will not adversely impact the AQRV's of nearby potentially affected class I areas.

In the case of nonattainment areas, the State or the source must provide offsetting emissions reductions for any significant increase in a nonattainment pollutant from the pollution control project. In other words, if a significant collateral increase of a nonattainment pollutant resulting from a pollution control project is not offset on at least a one-to-one ratio then the pollution control project would not qualify as environmentally beneficial.⁶ However, rather than having to apply offsets on a case-by-case basis, States may consider adopting (as part of their attainment plans) specific control measures or strategies for the purpose of generating offsets to mitigate the projected collateral emissions increases from a class or category of pollution control projects.

(b) Determination of Increase in Emissions

The question of whether a proposed project will result in an emissions increase over pre-modification levels of actual emissions is both complicated and contentious. It is a question that has been debated by the New Source Review Reform Subcommittee of the Clean Air Act Advisory Committee and is expected to be revisited by EPA in the same upcoming rulemaking that will consider adopting a pollution control project exclusion. In the interim, EPA is adopting a simplified approach to determining whether a pollution control project will result in increased emissions.

The approach in this policy is premised on the fact that EPA does not expect the vast majority of these pollution control projects to change established utilization patterns at the source. As discussed in the previous section, it is EPA's experience that add-on controls do not impact utilization, and pollution prevention projects that could increase utilization may not be excluded under this guidance. Therefore, in most cases it will be very easy to calculate the emissions after the change: the product of the new emissions rate times the existing utilization rate. In the case of a pollution control project that collaterally increases a non-targeted pollutant, the actual increase (calculated using the new emissions rate and current utilization pattern) would need to be analyzed to determine its air quality impact.

⁶Regardless of the severity of the classification of the nonattainment area, a one-to-one offset ratio will be considered sufficient under this policy to mitigate a collateral increase from a pollution control project. States may, however, require offset ratios that are greater than one-to-one.

The permitting authority may presume that projects meeting the definition outlined in section III(A)(1) will not change utilization patterns. However, the permitting authority is to reject this presumption where there is reason to believe that the project will result in debottlenecking, loadshifting to take advantage of the control equipment, or other meaningful increase in the use of the unit above current levels. Where the project will increase utilization and emissions, the associated emissions increases are calculated based on the post-modification potential to emit of the unit considering the application of the proposed controls. In such cases the permitting agency should consider the projected increase in emissions as collateral to the project and determine whether, notwithstanding the emissions increases, the project is still environmentally beneficial and meets all applicable safeguards.

In certain limited circumstances, a permitting agency may take action to impose federally-enforceable limits on the magnitude of a projected collateral emissions increase to ensure that all safeguards are met. For example, where the data used to assess a projected collateral emissions increase is questionable and there is reason to believe that emissions in excess of the projected increase would violate an applicable air quality standard or significantly exceed the quantity of offsets provided, restrictions on the magnitude of the collateral increase may be necessary to ensure compliance with the applicable safeguards.

IV. Procedural Safeguards

Because EPA has not yet promulgated regulations governing a generally applicable pollution control project exclusion from major NSR (other than for electric utilities), permitting authorities must consider and approve requests for an exclusion on a case-by-case basis, and the exclusion is not self-executing. Instead, sources must receive case-by-case approval from the permitting authority pursuant to a minor NSR permitting process, State nonapplicability determination or similar process. [Nothing in this guidance voids or creates an exclusion from any applicable minor source preconstruction review requirement in any SIP that has been approved pursuant to section 110(a)(2)(C) and 40 CFR 51.160-164.] This process should also provide that the application for the exclusion and the permitting agency's proposed decision thereon be subject to public notice and the opportunity for public and EPA written comment. In those limited cases where the applicable SIP already exempts a class or category of pollution controls project from the minor source permitting public notice and comment requirements, and where no collateral increases are expected (e.g., the installation of a

baghouse) and all otherwise applicable environmental safeguards are complied with, public notice and comment need not be provided for such projects. However, even in such circumstances, the permitting agency should provide advance notice to EPA when it applies this policy to provide an exclusion. For standard-wide applications to groups of sources (e.g., RACT or MACT), the notice may be provided to EPA at the time the permitting authority intends to issue a pollution control exclusion for the class or category of sources and thereafter notice need not be given to EPA on an individual basis for sources within the noticed group.

V. Emission Reduction Credits

In general, certain pollution control projects which have been approved for an exclusion from major NSR may result in emission reductions which can serve as NSR offsets or netting credits. All or part of the emission reductions equal to the difference between the pre-modification actual and post-modification potential emissions for the decreased pollutant may serve as credits provided that 1) the project will not result in a significant collateral increase in actual emissions of any criteria pollutant, 2) the project is still considered environmentally beneficial, and 3) all otherwise applicable criteria for the crediting of such reductions are met (e.g., quantifiable, surplus, permanent, and enforceable). Where an excluded pollution control project results in a significant collateral increase of a criteria pollutant, emissions reduction credits from the pollution control project for the controlled pollutant may still be granted provided, in addition to 2) and 3) above, the actual collateral increase is reduced below the applicable significance level, either through contemporaneous reductions at the source or external offsets. However, neither the exclusion from major NSR nor any credit (full or partial) for emission reductions should be granted by the permitting authority where the type or amount of the emissions increase which would result from the use of such credits would lessen the environmental benefit associated with the pollution control project to the point where the project would not have initially qualified for an exclusion.

IV. Illustrative Examples

The following examples illustrate some of the guiding principles and safeguards discussed above in reviewing proposed pollution control projects for an exclusion from major NSR.

Example 1

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: A chemical manufacturing facility in an attainment area for all pollutants is proposing to install a RTO to reduce VOC emissions (including emissions of some hazardous pollutants) at the plant by about 3000 tons per year (tpy). The emissions reductions from the RTO are currently voluntary, but may be necessary in the future for title III MACT compliance. Although the RTO has been designed to minimize NO_x emissions, it will produce 200 tpy of new NO_x emissions due to the unique composition of the emissions stream. There is no information about the project to rebut a presumption that the project will not change utilization of the source. Aside from the NO_x increase there are no other environmental impacts known to be associated with the project.

EVALUATION: As a qualifying add-on control device, the project may be considered a pollution control project and may be considered for an exclusion. The permitting agency should: 1) verify that the NO_x increase has been minimized to the extent practicable, 2) confirm (through modeling or other appropriate means) that the actual significant increase in NO_x emissions does not violate the applicable NAAQS,⁷ PSD increment, or adversely impact any Class I area AQRV, and 3) apply all otherwise applicable SIP and minor source permitting requirements, including opportunity for public notice and comment.

Example 2

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: A source proposes to replace an existing coal-fired boiler with a gas-fired turbine as part of a cogeneration project. The new turbine is an exact replacement for the energy needs supplied by the existing boiler and will emit less of each pollutant on an hourly basis than the boiler did.

EVALUATION: The replacement of an existing emissions unit with a new unit (albeit more efficient and less polluting) does not qualify for an exclusion as a pollution control project. The company can, however, use any otherwise applicable netting credits from the removal of the existing boiler to seek to net the new unit out of major NSR.

⁷If the source were located in an area in which nonattainment NSR applied to NO_x emissions increases, 200 tons of NO_x offset credits would be required for the project to be eligible for an exclusion.

Example 3

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: A source plans to physically renovate and upgrade an existing process line by making certain changes to the existing process, including extensive modifications to emissions units. Following the changes, the source will expand production and manufacture and market a new product line. The project will cause an increase in the economic efficiency of the line. The renovated line will also be less polluting on a per-product basis than the original configuration.

EVALUATION: The change is not eligible for an exclusion as a pollution control project. On balance, the project does not have clearly evident pollution control aspects, and the resultant decrease in the per-product emissions rate (or factor) is incidental to the project. The project is a physical change or change in the method of operation that will increase efficiency and productivity.

Example 4

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: In response to the phaseout of chlorofluorocarbons (CFC) under title VI of the Act, a major source is proposing to substitute a less ozone-depleting substance (e.g., HCFC-141b) for one it currently uses that has a greater ozone depleting potential (e.g., CFC-11). A larger amount of the less-ozone depleting substance will have to be used. No other changes are proposed.

EVALUATION: The project may be considered a pollution control project and may be considered for an exclusion. The permitting agency should verify that 1) actual annual emissions of HCFC-141b after the proposed switch will cause less stratospheric ozone depletion than current annual emissions of CFC-11; 2) the proposed switch will not change utilization patterns or increase emissions of any other pollutant which would impact a NAAQS, PSD increment, or AQRV and will not cause any cross-media harm, including any unacceptable increased risk associated with toxic air pollutants; and 3) apply all otherwise applicable SIP and minor source permitting requirements, including opportunity for public notice and comment.

Example 5

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: An existing landfill proposes to install either flares or energy recovery equipment [i.e., turbines or internal combustion (IC) engines]. The reductions from the project are estimated at over 1000 tpy of VOC and are currently not necessary to meet Act requirements, but may be necessary some time in the future. In case A the project is the replacement of an existing flare or energy system and no increase in NO_x emissions will occur. In case B, the equipment is a first time installation and will result in a 100 tpy increase in NO_x. In case C, the equipment is an addition to existing equipment which will accommodate additional landfill gas (resulting from increased gas generation and/or capture consistent with the current permitted limits for growth at the landfill) and will result in a 50 tpy increase in NO_x.

EVALUATION: Projects A, B, and C may be considered pollution control projects and may be considered for an exclusion; however, in cases B and C, if the landfill is located in an area required to satisfy nonattainment NSR for NO_x emissions, the source would be required to obtain NO_x offsets at a ratio of at least 1:1 for the project to be considered for an exclusion. [NOTE: VOC-NO_x netting and trading for NSR purposes may be discussed in the upcoming NSR rulemaking, but it is beyond the scope of this guidance.] Although neither turbines or IC engines are listed in section III.A.1 as add-on control devices and would normally not be considered pollution control projects, in this specific application they serve the same function as a flare, namely to reduce VOC emissions at the landfill with the added incidental benefit of producing useful energy in the process.⁸

The permitting agency should: 1) verify that the NO_x increase has been minimized to the extent practicable; 2) confirm

⁸The production of energy here is incidental to the project and is not a factor in qualifying the project for an exclusion as a pollution control project. In addition, any supplemental or co-firing of non-landfill gas fuels (e.g., natural gas, oil) would disqualify the project from being considered a pollution control project. The fuels would be used to maximize any economic benefit from the project and not for the purpose of pollution control at the landfill. However, the use of an alternative fuel solely as a backup fuel to be used only during brief and infrequent start-up or emergency situations would not necessarily disqualify an energy recovery project from being considered a pollution control project.

(through modeling or other appropriate means) that the actual significant increase in NO_x emissions will not violate the applicable NAAQS, PSD increment, or adversely impact any AQRV; and 3) apply all otherwise applicable SIP and minor source and, as noted above, in cases B and C ensures that NO_x offsets are provided in an area in which nonattainment review applies to NO_x emissions increases. permitting requirements, including opportunity for public notice and comment.