



New Zealand introduces HFC gas permit



EPA general manager, Dr Fiona Thomson-Carter

THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION Authority (EPA) is implementing a new permit system in response to the Kigali Amendment, an international agreement the New Zealand Government has signed, to reduce the levels of hydrofluorocarbons (HFC) gases in the Earth's atmosphere.

Dr Fiona Thomson-Carter, general manager of the EPA's Hazardous Substances group said the permit scheme will be introduced from February 2019.

It will require all bulk imports and exports of new and recycled HFC gases into/out of New Zealand to have a permit.

The new permit system intends to help New Zealand reach the first modelled phase-down target of 1338.3 carbon dioxide-equivalent tonnes of HFC gas, by December 31, 2020.

Dr Thomson-Carter said HFC gases have been identified as having a high global warming potential (GWP) that can be as much as 50 to 14,800 times more potent than carbon dioxide.

"We expect the permit scheme to be an adjustment for industries that use large quantities of HFC gases, like refrigeration and air-conditioning, as they will need to reduce their use of HFC gases and switch to other more environmentally friendly-refrigerants over time," Dr Thomson-Carter said.

Under the permit system New Zealand's total net import quantity of new bulk HFC gases will be split into a range of permits that will include 80 per cent being made available to holders with grandparented eligibility.

"This grandparented eligibility is open to previous importers of HFC gases from January 2015 to December 2017."

Importers will have until March 18, 2019 to complete the one-off eligibility process, and will still need to obtain an annual import permit, according to Dr Thomson-Carter.

"A number of special permits, with a number of requirements, will also be available for those that may be unable to get grandparented eligibility."

New Zealand will officially ratify the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal protocol with the United Nations in October 2019.

The EPA's role under the Ozone Layer Protection Regulations will see the Authority manage the scheme which will decrease the amount of HFC gases permitted over time.