

**Authority:** 42 U.S.C. 7401 *et seq.*

Dated: November 26, 2021.

**John Blevins,**

*Acting Regional Administrator, Region 4.*

[FR Doc. 2021–26142 Filed 12–3–21; 8:45 am]

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## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

### 40 CFR Part 52

[EPA–R10–OAR–2017–0031; FRL–9177–01–R10]

### Air Plan Approval; AK; Removal of Excess Emissions Provision

**AGENCY:** Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

**ACTION:** Proposed rule.

**SUMMARY:** The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing to approve a State Implementation Plan (SIP) revision submitted by the State of Alaska, through the Alaska Department of Environment Conservation, on January 9, 2017. The revision was submitted by Alaska in response to a finding of substantial inadequacy and SIP call published on June 12, 2015, for a provision in the Alaska SIP related to excess emissions during startup, shutdown, and malfunction (SSM) events. EPA is proposing approval of the SIP revision and proposing to determine that such SIP revision corrects the deficiency identified in the June 12, 2015, SIP call.

**DATES:** Comments must be received on or before January 5, 2022.

**ADDRESSES:** Submit your comments, identified by Docket ID No. EPA–R10–OAR–2017–0031 at <https://www.regulations.gov>. Follow the online instructions for submitting comments. Once submitted, comments cannot be edited or removed from [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov). EPA may publish any comment received to its public docket. Do not electronically submit any information you consider to be Confidential Business Information (CBI) or other information, the disclosure of which is restricted by statute. Multimedia submissions (audio, video, etc.) must be accompanied by a written comment. The written comment is considered the official comment and should include discussion of all points you wish to make. EPA will generally not consider comments or comment contents located outside of the primary submission (*i.e.*, on the web, cloud, or other file sharing system). For additional submission methods, the full EPA public comment policy, information about CBI or

multimedia submissions, and general guidance on making effective comments, please visit <https://www.epa.gov/dockets/commenting-epa-dockets>.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Randall Ruddick, EPA Region 10, 1200 Sixth Avenue (Suite 155), Seattle, WA 98101, (206) 553–1999; or email [ruddick.randall@epa.gov](mailto:ruddick.randall@epa.gov).

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Throughout this document wherever “we” or “our” is used, it refers to EPA.

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#### I. Background

On February 22, 2013, a **Federal Register** notice of proposed rulemaking was published outlining EPA’s policy at the time with respect to SIP provisions related to periods of SSM. EPA analyzed specific SSM SIP provisions and explained how each one either did or did not comply with the CAA with regard to excess emission events.<sup>1</sup> For each SIP provision that EPA determined to be inconsistent with the CAA, EPA proposed to find that the existing SIP provision was substantially inadequate to meet CAA requirements and thus proposed to issue a SIP call under CAA section 110(k)(5). On September 17, 2014, EPA issued a document supplementing and revising what the Agency had previously proposed on February 22, 2013, in light of a D.C. Circuit decision that determined the CAA precludes authority of the EPA to create affirmative defense provisions applicable to private civil suits. EPA outlined its updated policy that affirmative defense SIP provisions are not consistent with CAA requirements. EPA proposed in the supplemental proposal document to apply its revised interpretation of the CAA to specific affirmative defense SIP provisions and proposed SIP calls for those provisions where appropriate (79 FR 55920, September 17, 2014).

On June 12, 2015, pursuant to CAA section 110(k)(5), EPA finalized “State Implementation Plans: Response to Petition for Rulemaking; Restatement and Update of EPA’s SSM Policy Applicable to SIPs; Findings of Substantial Inadequacy; and SIP Calls

To Amend Provisions Applying to Excess Emissions During Periods of Startup, Shutdown and Malfunction,” (80 FR 33839, June 12, 2015), hereafter referred to as the “2015 SSM SIP Action.” The 2015 SSM SIP Action clarified, restated, and updated EPA’s interpretation that SSM exemption and affirmative defense SIP provisions are inconsistent with CAA requirements. The 2015 SSM SIP Action found that certain SIP provisions in 36 states were substantially inadequate to meet CAA requirements and issued a SIP call to those states to submit SIP revisions to address the inadequacies. EPA established an 18-month deadline by which the affected states had to submit such SIP revisions. States were required to submit corrective revisions to their SIPs in response to the SIP calls by November 22, 2016. The detailed rationale for issuing the SIP call to Alaska can be found in the 2015 SSM SIP Action and preceding proposed actions.

EPA issued a Memorandum in October 2020 (2020 Memorandum), which stated that certain provisions governing SSM periods in SIPs could be viewed as consistent with CAA requirements.<sup>2</sup> Importantly, the 2020 Memorandum stated that it “did not alter in any way the determinations made in the 2015 SSM SIP Action that identified specific state SIP provisions that were substantially inadequate to meet the requirements of the Act.” Accordingly, the 2020 Memorandum had no direct impact on the SIP call issued to Alaska in 2015. The 2020 Memorandum did, however, indicate EPA’s intent at the time to review SIP calls that were issued in the 2015 SSM SIP Action to determine whether EPA should maintain, modify, or withdraw particular SIP calls through future agency actions.

On September 30, 2021, EPA’s Deputy Administrator withdrew the 2020 Memorandum and announced EPA’s return to the policy articulated in the 2015 SSM SIP Action (2021 Memorandum).<sup>3</sup> As articulated in the 2021 Memorandum, SIP provisions that contain exemptions or affirmative defense provisions are not consistent with CAA requirements and, therefore, generally are not approvable if

<sup>2</sup> October 9, 2020, memorandum “Inclusion of Provisions Governing Periods of Startup, Shutdown, and Malfunctions in State Implementation Plans,” from Andrew R. Wheeler, Administrator.

<sup>3</sup> September 30, 2021, memorandum “Withdrawal of the October 9, 2020, Memorandum Addressing Startup, Shutdown, and Malfunctions in State Implementation Plans and Implementation of the Prior Policy,” from Janet McCabe, Deputy Administrator.

<sup>1</sup> State Implementation Plans: Response to Petition for Rulemaking; Findings of Substantial Inadequacy; and SIP Calls To Amend Provisions Applying to Excess Emissions During Periods of Startup, Shutdown, and Malfunction, 78 FR 12460 (February 22, 2013).

contained in a SIP submission. The 2021 Memorandum also retracted the prior statement from the 2020 Memorandum of EPA's plans to review and potentially modify or withdraw particular SIP calls. That statement no longer reflects EPA's intent. EPA intends to implement the principles laid out in the 2015 SSM SIP Action as the agency takes action on SIP submissions, including this SIP submittal provided in response to the 2015 SIP call.

With regard to the Alaska SIP, in the 2015 SSM SIP Action, EPA determined that 18 AAC 50.240 was substantially inadequate to meet CAA requirements (80 FR 33973, June 12, 2015). The provision provided: "Excess emissions determined to be unavoidable under this section will be excused and are not subject to penalty. This section does not limit the department's power to enjoin the emission or require corrective action." The rationale underlying EPA's determination that the provision was substantially inadequate to meet CAA requirements, and therefore to issue a SIP call to Alaska to remedy the provision, is detailed in the 2015 SSM SIP Action and the accompanying proposals.

Alaska submitted a SIP revision on January 9, 2017, in response to the SIP call issued in the 2015 SSM SIP Action. In its submission, Alaska is requesting that EPA revise the Alaska SIP by removing 18 AAC 50.240 in its entirety, thereby removing this provision from the Alaska SIP.

## II. Analysis of SIP Submission

EPA is proposing to approve Alaska's January 9, 2017, SIP submission, which would remove the provision identified as inconsistent with CAA requirements from the Alaska SIP. Alaska is retaining 18 AAC 50.240 for state law purposes only, with revisions to clarify that (1) all excess emissions are violations and (2) the provision applies only to Alaska in exercising its enforcement authority and therefore does not preclude citizens or EPA from seeking injunctive relief or civil penalties for excess emissions. Alaska submitted the revised state-only version of 18 AAC 50.240 solely for informational purposes to show a complete record of the clarifications. Based on the revisions to 18 AAC 50.240 made by Alaska and Alaska's request to remove it from the Alaska SIP, EPA proposes to find that Alaska's January 9, 2017, SIP revision is consistent with CAA requirements and adequately addresses the specific deficiencies that EPA identified in the 2015 SSM SIP Action with respect to the Alaska SIP.

## III. Proposed Action

Under the CAA, the Administrator is required to approve a SIP submission that complies with the provisions of the CAA and applicable Federal regulations. 42 U.S.C. 7410(k); 40 CFR 52.02(a). EPA is proposing to approve Alaska's January 9, 2017, SIP submission requesting removal of 18 AAC 50.240 "Excess Emissions" from the Alaska SIP. We are proposing approval of the SIP revision because we have determined that it is consistent with the requirements for SIP provisions under the CAA. EPA is further proposing to determine that such SIP revision corrects the deficiency identified in the June 12, 2015, SIP call. EPA is not reopening the 2015 SSM SIP Action and is only taking comment on whether this SIP revision is consistent with CAA requirements and whether it addresses the substantial inadequacy in the specific Alaska SIP provision (18 AAC 50.240) identified in the 2015 SSM SIP Action.

## IV. Incorporation by Reference

In this document, EPA is proposing to remove in a final rule, regulatory text that includes incorporation by reference. In accordance with requirements of 1 CFR 51.5, EPA is proposing to remove the incorporation by reference of "18 AAC 50.240" in 40 CFR 52.70, as described in Section II of this preamble. EPA has made, and will continue to make, these documents generally available through <https://www.regulations.gov> and at the EPA Region 10 Office (please contact the person identified in the **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** section of this preamble for more information).

## V. Statutory and Executive Order Reviews

Under the CAA, the Administrator is required to approve a SIP submission that complies with the provisions of the CAA and applicable Federal regulations. 42 U.S.C. 7410(k); 40 CFR 52.02(a). Thus, in reviewing SIP submissions, EPA's role is to approve state choices, provided that they meet the criteria of the CAA. Accordingly, this proposed action merely approves removal of State law not meeting Federal requirements and does not impose additional requirements beyond those already imposed by State law. For that reason, this proposed action:

- Is not a "significant regulatory action" subject to review by the Office of Management and Budget under Executive Orders 12866 (58 FR 51735, October 4, 1993) and 13563 (76 FR 3821, January 21, 2011);

- Does not impose an information collection burden under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*);

- Is certified as not having a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities under the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*);

- Does not contain any unfunded mandate or significantly or uniquely affect small governments, as described in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-4);

- Does not have federalism implications as specified in Executive Order 13132 (64 FR 43255, August 10, 1999);

- Is not an economically significant regulatory action based on health or safety risks subject to Executive Order 13045 (62 FR 19885, April 23, 1997);

- Is not a significant regulatory action subject to Executive Order 13211 (66 FR 28355, May 22, 2001);

- Is not subject to requirements of Section 12(d) of the National Technology Transfer and Advancement Act of 1995 (15 U.S.C. 272 note) because application of those requirements would be inconsistent with the CAA; and

- Does not provide EPA with the discretionary authority to address, as appropriate, disproportionate human health or environmental effects, using practicable and legally permissible methods, under Executive Order 12898 (59 FR 7629, February 16, 1994).

The Alaska SIP does not apply on any Indian reservation land or in any other area where EPA or an Indian tribe has demonstrated that a tribe has jurisdiction. In those areas of Indian country, this rulemaking does not have tribal implications as specified by Executive Order 13175 (65 FR 67249, November 9, 2000), nor will it impose substantial direct costs on tribal governments or preempt tribal law.

## List of Subjects in 40 CFR Part 52

Environmental protection, Air pollution control, Incorporation by reference, Intergovernmental relations, Particulate matter, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Sulfur oxides.

**Authority:** 42 U.S.C. 7401 *et seq.*

Dated: November 30, 2021.

**Michelle L. Pirzadeh,**

*Acting Regional Administrator, Region 10.*

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