

SMALLBIZ@EPA

EPA's Asbestos and Small Business Ombuds Program

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE REGULATED SMALL BUSINESS COMMUNITY

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

► Policy and Regulation

- [EPA Announces Intent to Regulate Dozens of Uses of Five Phthalate Chemicals...](#)
- [Response to Comments on NESHAP for Integrated Iron and Steel Manufacturing Facilities...](#)
- [Oil and Natural Gas Sector Climate Review and Extension of Deadlines...](#)
- [Final Rule for Maximum Permissible Level of Azoxystrobin Pesticide...](#)
- [2026 Proposed Perchlorate Rulemaking](#)

► Key Dates and Opportunities

- [EPA Unveils Clean Air Act \(CAA\) Related Resource...](#)

► Discover SBEAP

► Spotlight

- [EPA and Army Wrap Up Public Listening Sessions on Proposed Definition of WOTUS...](#)
- [EPA Accelerates Crackdown on Toxic and Poisonous Imports...](#)

EPA's Small Business Ombudsman Support

Have a question about a SmallBiz@EPA article or EPA press release? Need help getting to the best regulatory contact, web information, or have a small business item to add to SmallBiz@EPA?

Contact the [ASBO Program](#) through our live hotline service (M-F, 8:30AM – 4:30PM ET) or via [email](#). We're here to help with your small business compliance/enforcement questions and general asbestos concerns.

Contact Us



ASBO Hotline: 800-368-5888



Email: asbo@EPA.gov



POLICY AND REGULATION

EPA Announces Intent to Regulate Dozens of Uses of Five Phthalate Chemicals to Protect Workers and the Environment

On December 31, 2025, EPA announced that it will move to regulate dozens of applications of five widely used phthalate chemicals to address environmental and workplace risks. This decision is based on final risk evaluations for butyl benzyl phthalate (BBP), dibutyl phthalate (DBP), dicyclohexyl phthalate (DCHP), diethylhexyl phthalate (DEHP), and diisobutyl phthalate (DIBP). Phthalates are commonly used to make plastics more flexible in everything from building materials to industrial applications. EPA's regulatory focus will target the specific uses of phthalates that harm workers or threaten the environment.

[*Read more on the new and expanded regulations of phthalates.*](#)

Response to Comments on NESHAP for Integrated Iron and Steel Manufacturing Facilities Technology Review

EPA took final action to respond to comments on an interim final rule (IFR) related to the National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) for Integrated Iron and Steel Manufacturing Facilities. Specifically, EPA responded to comments on the IFR published in the Federal Register on July 3, 2025, that revised compliance deadlines for certain provisions related to planned bleeder valve openings, unplanned bleeder valve openings, blast furnace casthouses, basic oxygen process furnace shops, slag processing and handling, beaching, and fence line monitoring. After carefully considering the comments, EPA concluded that the amendments made in the IFR are warranted and is not making any further changes to the compliance deadlines revised in the IFR.

Effective Date: December 3, 2025

[*Read the NESHAP Iron and Steel Review in the Federal Register.*](#)

Oil and Natural Gas Sector Climate Review and Extension of Deadlines in Standards of Performance for New, Reconstructed, and Modified Sources and Emissions Guidelines for Existing Sources

EPA took final action to respond to comments on an IFR related to the new source performance standards (NSPS) and emissions guidelines for crude oil and natural gas facilities established at [40 CFR part 60, subparts OOOOb](#) and OOOOc. Specifically, EPA responded to comments on the IFR published in the Federal Register on July 31, 2025, that:

- Extended deadlines for certain provisions related to control devices, equipment leaks, storage vessels, process controllers, and covers/closed vent systems.

- Extended the date for future implementation of the Super Emitter Program.
- Extended the State plan submittal deadline in OOOOc.

Effective Date: December 3, 2025

[*Read the Oil and Natural Gas Sector Climate Review and date extensions in the Federal Register.*](#)

Final Rule for Maximum Permissible Level of Azoxystrobin Pesticide Residues

This regulation established a tolerance for residues of azoxystrobin in or on black pepper. Under the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FFDCA), the American Spice Trade Association (ASTA) submitted a petition to EPA requesting that EPA establish a maximum permissible level for residues of this pesticide in or on the identified commodity. Objections and requests for hearings must be received on or before February 6, 2026, and must be filed in accordance with the instructions provided in [40 CFR part 178](#) (see also Unit I.C. of this document).

Effective Date: December 8, 2025

Deadline to Request a Hearing: On or Before February 6, 2026

[*Read the azoxystrobin final rule in the Federal Register.*](#)

2026 Proposed Perchlorate Rulemaking

On January 2, 2026, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) signed a proposed National Primary Drinking Water Regulation (NPDWR) and Maximum Contaminant Level Goal (MCLG) for perchlorate as a result of the D.C. Circuit's May 2023 decision in *NRDC v. Regan*.

The EPA is proposing a health-based Maximum Contaminant Level Goal (MCLG) of 0.02 mg/L (20 µg/L). The EPA is co-proposing enforceable Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) for perchlorate of 20 µg/L, 40 µg/L, or 80 µg/L.

The EPA will accept comments to the public docket identified by Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OW-2024-0592 at <http://www.regulations.gov> by March 9, 2026. The EPA is also holding a public hearing on February 19, 2026 at 1-4 pm ET, at which time the public will be invited to provide the EPA with verbal comments. Information and registration for the public hearing is available [here](#).

For information about perchlorate and the proposed National Primary Drinking Water Regulation for perchlorate:

- [Notice of Proposed Perchlorate National Primary Drinking Water Regulation](#)
- Fact Sheet: [Questions & Answers: Proposed National Primary Drinking Water Regulation for Perchlorate \(pdf\)](#) (131.28 KB, December 2025, EPA 815-F-25-011)

- Fact Sheet: [The EPA's Proposed National Primary Drinking Water Regulation for Perchlorate: Fact Sheet for Public Water Systems \(pdf\)](#) (508.04 KB, December 2025, EPA 815-F-25-010)

Deadline for Public Comment: March 9, 2026

Public Hearing: February 19, 2026, 1-4pm ET

[For additional support information on the Proposed Perchlorate Rulemaking go to the docket at Regulations.gov.](#)



KEY DATES AND OPPORTUNITIES

EPA Unveils Clean Air Act (CAA) Related Resource to Provide Transparency for Data Center Developers, Local Communities, and Tribes

On December 11, 2025, EPA's Office of Air and Radiation (OAR) launched the [Clean Air Act Resource for Data Centers](#) webpage to provide data center developers, local communities and Tribes with a central location for CAA related resources. These additional resources further two core pillars of EPA Administrator Zeldin's Powering the Great American Comeback Initiative — making America the artificial intelligence (AI) capital of the world and advancing cooperative federalism.

[Read the press release on the new CAA Data Centers webpage.](#)



DISCOVER SBEAP

As required under [Section 507 of the 1990 CAA Amendments](#), state SBEAPs partner with EPA in providing regulatory compliance assistance to small businesses. Each month, we highlight a different state SBEAP to help promote the important compliance assistance resources and services they offer to their local small business community.

Clear Guidance, Real Results: Iowa's Air Quality Resource for Small Businesses

Across the country, each state's SBEAP helps small businesses navigate complex environmental regulations. In Iowa, that program is the [Iowa Air Emissions Assistance Program \(IAEAP\)](#) – a trusted, no-cost resource that has helped thousands of Iowa businesses understand and meet their air quality responsibilities. Operated by the [Iowa Waste Reduction Center \(IWRC\)](#) at the [University of Northern Iowa](#), and funded by the [Iowa Department of Natural Resources Air Quality Bureau](#), the IAEAP stands out for its personalized support, practical tools, and deep commitment to Iowa's small business community.

What Sets Iowa's Program Apart?

Since its inception, the program has supported Iowa's small businesses across all 99 counties on more than 7,500 occasions. Whether it be a manufacturing facility, grain elevator, auto body shop, dry cleaner, printing operation, or other small business, the IAEAP helps facilities determine what permits are needed, what records need to be kept, identify applicable federal regulations (e.g., NESHAPs and NSPS), and complete required reports (e.g., emissions inventory).

IAEAP services include:

- Education and guidance on rules, regulations, and industry-specific resources.
- Assistance with permitting, recordkeeping, and reporting.
- On-site and virtual one-on-one consultations.
- Emissions calculators and web-based compliance tools.
- Assistance with Iowa's web-based application and reporting systems - Iowa Easy Air and State and Local Emissions Inventory System.

A Local Team with Real-World Expertise

The IAEAP team – led by Program Manager [Jennifer Wittenburg](#), with support from [Jordan Henniges](#) and [Dan Nickey](#) – bring decades of experience in environmental compliance. Working closely with Iowa's Small Business Ombudsman – [Christine Paulson](#) – the IAEAP team helps bridge the gap between the needs of Iowa small businesses and regulatory expectations. The program operates with fewer than two full-time employees, but it prides itself on providing timely, relevant, and approachable support to Iowa businesses, and its reach and impact are statewide.

Built for Iowa's Industries

The IAEAP continuously develops tools and resources for specific industries and common operations.

- [GrainPTE](#): A streamlined permitting and recordkeeping tool used by more than 800 grain elevators across Iowa.
- [Paint Tracker](#): A user-friendly program that helps facilities track painting/coating operations and meet recordkeeping requirements.
- [Emissions Calculators](#): Industry- and process-specific calculators to make emissions reporting simpler and more accurate.

The program also provides one-on-one targeted assistance with the Minor Source Emissions Inventory requirement.

What Iowa Businesses Are Saying

Business owners across Iowa consistently praise the IAEAP for its clarity, professionalism, and one-on-one support.

- “The IAEAP has been an extremely valuable resource for our company for a number of years. As a small manufacturing company, I recommend them to any business that lacks a dedicated subject matter expert.”
- “I was confused at the beginning as to what exactly needed to be reported, but after contacting the assistance program, everything was cleared up.”
- “They are an absolute blessing for small businesses. I cannot say enough good things about the help available and the professionalism of the people at IAEAP.”

Part of a Larger Effort, Centered in Iowa

While every state has a SBEAP, Iowa’s IAEAP is embedded within the IWRC, allowing it to offer support not only for air quality, but for broader topics including:

- Multimedia environmental assistance.
- Energy efficiency.
- Food, beverage, and organics.
- Painter training.

This integration ensures Iowa businesses have access to up-to-date, Iowa-specific resources that support long-term compliance and sustainability. To learn more about Iowa’s program and small business resources, [visit their website](#).



EPA and Army Wrap Up Public Listening Sessions on Proposed Definition of Waters of the United States (WOTUS)

On December 22, 2025, EPA and U.S. Department of the Army completed a series of listening sessions to hear input from the public on the agencies’ revised definition of WOTUS. Public input is essential to the rulemaking process and these sessions provided an important opportunity for the agencies to hear directly from a variety of stakeholders. It is clear that a durable definition of WOTUS is a priority that will protect

water quality and help advance the agency's [Powering the Great American Comeback initiative](#).

On November 17, 2025 the [agencies proposed a revised definition of WOTUS](#) that would follow the Supreme Court's clear direction in Sackett v. EPA and eliminate red tape, cut permitting costs, and lower the cost of doing business in communities across the country – all while maintaining key protections for the nation's waters.

[Learn more at EPA's Waters of the United States webpage.](#)

EPA Accelerates Crackdown on Toxic and Poisonous Imports in Concert with Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Keeping Americans Safe

On December 19, 2025, EPA enforcement leadership joined CBP officials in southern California for an import's inspection demonstration and tour of the Port of Los Angeles to reinforce coordination and information-sharing. Under the Trump administration, EPA has dramatically expanded its imports investigative capacity, enforcement scope, and launched broader investigations that target illegal pesticide and chemical smuggling operations across multiple sectors to safeguard communities, agricultural integrity, and national security. This enhanced enforcement led to the blocking of more than 200,000 pounds of illegal pesticide imports at ports across America in 2025 alone.

[Read the press release on EPA's accelerated import enforcement crackdown.](#)



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