



SB 1010 – Refrigerant Stewardship and Recovery Act *Reducing harmful refrigerant emissions from discarded appliances.*

SUMMARY

SB 1010 establishes an extended producer responsibility (EPR) program for household cooling appliances to help ensure refrigerants and other climate-damaging gases are properly managed at end of life.

This bill requires manufacturers to participate in, and fund, a stewardship program that provides convenient, statewide collection and ensures the safe end-of-life management of the covered appliances they produce.

BACKGROUND

Refrigerators, freezers, air conditioners, and other cooling appliances contain refrigerants, which are gases used to absorb and release heat. Common refrigerants include hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), hydrofluoroolefins (HFOs), hydrocarbons, and, in older appliances, chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs). HFCs are among the most potent greenhouse gases in use and are the fastest-growing source of greenhouse gas emissions both in California and globally.¹

California has established similar EPR programs, namely the Used Mattress Recovery and Recycling Act. In 2021 alone, the program recycled 1.6 million mattresses, recovering over 40 thousand metric tons of material. In total, the effort prevented 75 million pounds of greenhouse gases and saved 818 million gallons of water.² California has also established stewardship programs across a range of product categories, including packaging, prescription and over-the-counter medications, textiles, and batteries.

However, a comprehensive program to address refrigerant emissions from discarded appliances remains a critical gap in the state's climate strategy. Without a comprehensive statewide program, improper handling can result in the release of these gases into the atmosphere, severely undermining California's climate progress.

THE PROBLEM

Existing law requires, along with reductions in other major categories of climate pollutants, California to reduce HFC emissions by 40 percent below 2013 levels by 2030. The importance of end-of-life refrigerant management will only increase as demand for cooling continues to grow and the state works to meet its climate targets.

Current law prohibits disposal and landfilling of metallic waste, such as large appliances including refrigeration units. However, many units are still not properly processed to recover all hazardous components, such as HFCs, compressor oils, and capacitors. When these appliances end up in landfills, there is a greater risk of refrigerant leakage. However, existing law does not guarantee that refrigerants are recovered before that occurs.

California's most robust voluntary recycling efforts have reached only a fraction of appliances at end of life. The most successful program recycles approximately 70,000 refrigerators per year, avoiding emissions equivalent to removing 760,000 cars from the road.⁴ However, this program serves only a portion of the state, leaving significant gaps in coverage.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Responsible Appliance Disposal program, for every 1,000 refrigerators properly recycled, greenhouse gas emissions are reduced by the equivalent of keeping 1,500 passenger cars off the road for a year.⁵ Without a mandatory program, there is no guarantee that potent refrigerants in millions of California's discarded appliances will ever be recovered.

THE SOLUTION

SB 1010 establishes the state's first mandatory, manufacturer-funded EPR program for cooling appliances. This bill requires manufacturers to join a Producer Responsibility Organization (PRO) that develops and funds a statewide plan for the

¹ [CARB - Climate Pollutants](#)

² [Mattress Recycling Council](#)

³ [CARB - HFCs](#)

⁴ [CPUC - Recycling Refrigerators](#)

⁵ [EPA - RAD Program Benefits](#)

collection, transportation, and proper recovery and recycling of covered appliances. Fees paid by manufacturers are eco-modulated, meaning companies that design more climate-friendly, energy-efficient, and easier-to-recycle products pay less, creating a direct incentive to build better appliances from the start.

This approach reduces costs for taxpayers, expands convenient recycling options for consumers, and ensures manufacturers – not local governments – are responsible for managing the environmental impacts of their products.

By establishing a producer-funded statewide collection and recovery system, SB 1010 helps ensure that potent greenhouse gases in California’s discarded cooling appliances are safely managed, not released into the atmosphere.

SUPPORT

California Product Stewardship Council (Sponsor)

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