

Clean Air Act

Agencies: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Citation: [42 U.S.C. §§ 7401 et seq.](#)

Enacted as: the "Clean Air Act", on December 17, 1963

Summary:

The [Clean Air Act \(CAA\)](#) is the comprehensive federal law that regulates air emissions from stationary and mobile sources. Among other things, this law authorizes the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to establish [National Ambient Air Quality Standards \(NAAQS\)](#) to protect public health and public welfare, and to regulate emissions of hazardous air pollutants.

One of the goals of the CAA was to set and achieve NAAQS in every state by 1975 in order to address the public health and welfare risks posed by certain widespread air pollutants. The setting of these pollutant standards was coupled with directing the states to develop state implementation plans (SIPs), applicable to appropriate industrial sources in the state, in order to achieve these standards. The CAA was amended in 1977 and 1990 primarily to set new goals (dates) for achieving attainment of NAAQS since many areas of the country had failed to meet the deadlines.

Section 112 of the CAA addresses emissions of hazardous air pollutants. Prior to 1990, the CAA established a risk-based program under which only a few standards were developed. The 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments revised section 112 to require issuance of technology-based standards for major sources and certain area sources. "Major sources" are defined as a stationary source or group of stationary sources that emit or have the potential to emit 10 tons per year or more of a hazardous air pollutant or 25 tons per year or more of a combination of hazardous air pollutants. An "area source" is any stationary source that is not a major source.

For major sources, section 112 requires EPA to establish emission standards that require the maximum degree of reduction in emissions of hazardous air pollutants. These emission standards are commonly referred to as "maximum achievable control technology" or "MACT" standards. Eight years after the technology-based MACT standards are issued for a source category, EPA is required to review those standards to determine whether any residual risk exists for that source category and, if necessary, revise the standards to address such risk.

Source: <http://www.epa.gov/lawsregs/laws/caa.html>

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