MIPIGGs Newsletter – Guide To Helping The UK Government

EVERYONE PLEASE HELP – THE UK IS FAILING !

Why The UK Government Has Appealed For Help

The UK government claims the climate threat is the greatest long term issue facing the world and poses a bigger risk than terrorism, yet it now acknowledges that it will miss its target of a 20% reduction in CO2 by 2010[1].

MIPIGGs supports far more effective action across the board, for example to phase out fossil fuels, utilise biofuels and renewable energy and introduce other key un-utilised technologies such as regenerable fuel cells for storing renewable electricity.

But the present UK policy and practice on f-gases - potent industrial greenhouse gases such as HFCs - is simply lamentable and is adding significantly to the problem. The UK needs to raise its game on f-gases.

How To Help

Speaking on UK Channel News on 8 December at 12pm Environment Secretary Margaret Beckett said:

"What we want to hear from ... people ... is how realistically and acceptably we can do better" in responding to climate change

MIPIGGs top ten ideas on how Mrs Beckett and her colleagues can do better are below*.

Top Ten Actions For The UK To Do Better On Climate Change By Taking Action on F Gases

1. Stop Using HFCs Yourselves

The UK Government itself is still using HFCs. It issues only vague advice to its own procurement officers to avoid HFCs[2]. As a result major government projects are still being filled with equipment using these powerful greenhouse gases, which inevitably leak during use (the main market is “after sales” ie top-ups) or at the end of equipments life, as reflected in the rapid build up in the atmosphere (another 25% increase recorded recently[3]).

The latest example: the UK Met Office - the scientific centre for Tony Blair's much-vaunted climate policy and the hosts of the Hadley Centre models of global climate change - is purchasing potent industrial greenhouse gases (HFCs) for its

own air conditioning[4] !

Recent written UK Parliamentary Answers (Hansard, Mon 4 October 2004) showed that HFC emissions from mobile sources are 63% greater than previously acknowledged and those from static sources are 16% greater

2. Use The Alternatives Available On Your Own Doorstep and Support UK Companies Making Alternatives

The main alternatives to HFCs or PFCs in fire extinguishers are water, carbon dioxide and Inergen. Wormald are a major UK manufacturer of all types of fire extinguishers and systems, all HFC-free. See www.wormald.co.uk/fire/fire.html Non-HFC office and domestic air conditioning is available from www.earthcareproducts.co.uk. www.star-ref.co.uk Scotland's Star Refrigeration produce large air conditioning and industrial refrigeration. York International produce hydrocarbon, ammonia and absorption systems. http://www.york.com Calor Gas produce 'CARE' hydrocarbon refrigerants www.care-refrigerants.co.uk.

3. Help Business and Consumers - Ban HFCs In Refrigeration And Airconditioning

Consumers buying a domestic fridge should only chose one from Hotpoint, Siemens or Bosch to be sure of avoiding HFCs (these three use hydrocarbons - all other manufacturers make at least some HFC fridges). But 95% of HFCs are found in industrial or commercial refrigeration.

Although alternatives (such as hydrocarbons, ammonia, and water) are available and widely used in other countries (eg Denmark and Austria), the UK government does nothing to encourage businesses to use them and nothing to avoid HFCs. This will add to the problem of climate change[5]. It has even opposed European proposals to require HFCs to be recovered from scrap equipment.

4. Stop Obstructing Progress In Europe

During discussions and in votes on EU rules on limiting emissions and uses of fluorinated greenhouse gases (f-gases) the UK lined up against countries such as Denmark and Austria and Sweden, which wanted tigther controls on f-gases in cars, and a legal basis founded in environment rather than trade law.

The trade, "internal market" measures, require identical implementation across the EU. This would have prevented Austria and Denmark from pursuing their stricter controls on f-gases. After complex negotiations, the upshot is that Denmark and Austria are now exposed to legal action inspired by the chemicals lobby, on grounds that their stronger domestic measures against HFCs are

impeding free movement of goods. The UK has also supported measures which allow HFC-152a in mobile air conditioning, also supported by some in the American f-gas industry and car-makers .

So the UK Government's position (a) supports the US car industry and allows more use of HFCs and (b) by supporting a trade-basis rather than an environment legal basis for the regulation, countries such as Denmark and Austria, which have led action against HFCs, can be penalised and prevented from going further.

The UK has an opportunity to go into forward rather than reverse gear when the draft directive again comes before the European Parliament in early 2005.

As an indication – in October, in line with industry lobbies, the European Commission launched legal infringement proceedings against Austria and Denmark, claiming that their national legislation phasing out f-gases in some applications is too restrictive.

5. Learn From German Research – Introduce Comprehensive F-Gas Phase-Outs

In February 2004 the German Environmental Protection Agency produced a comprehensive 240 report on f-gases and alternatives that avoid them, across 20 sectors. It is available in English at www.mipiggs.org <http://www.mipiggs.org/> and from the German EPA. It shows that almost every use can be avoided completely[6]. The UK Government should use this to plan a rapid phase out of all HFC systems.

6. Achieve Double Climate Benefits

Because hydrocarbon fridges are more efficient than HFCs, using them will also reduce CO2 emissions from fossil fuel burn for electricity[7].

7. Advise Consumers Not To Buy A New Car With HFCs, And Demand Non HFC Airconditioning For New Vehicles From Makers

Booming car sales and use of airconditioning are fuelling the massive rise in HFC air pollution. Car air conditioning leaks 10 – 20% of its 'charge' every year and even 'enhanced' systems promoted for example by Ford/Volvo will eventually lose all their HFCs to the air.

The UK Government should demand that car manufacturers rapidly commercialise new technologies such as CO2-based air conditioning, developed by Visteon, Toyota, BMW and Shecco. Systems developed in Germany are said to be ready for use in 2006, and those in France (Visteon) in 2009. Ministers

should speed this up and meanwhile advise consumers not to buy a car with an HFC system.

8. Label HFCs and Other F Gases

MIPIGGs has demanded that Ministers should require a warning label on all equipment with HFCs or other f-gases. So far nothing has been done. Here's our proposed label.

9. Help Patients Avoid HFCs

Quite a number of medical aerosols (metered dose inhalers) use HFCs as replacements for CFCs. Government should actively advise patients or guardians to take medical advice but ask their doctor or pharmacist for dry powder inhalers as an alternative where possible[8]. In Sweden, 80% of the MDI market is now replaced with DPI or dry powder inhalers

10. Help Truckers Avoid The HFC Road

An alternative system coming into wider use is CO2 based 'cryogenic' cooling[9] where liquid CO2 is used as a cold reservoir to chill another refrigerant. This is used for example in lorries delivering perishable foodstuffs. The government should make it a requirement of all public contracts that any supplier using mobile refrigeration uses this or another non HFC system.

* You can send your suggestions to her at Defra, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square London SW1P 3JR. Unfortunately she doesn't have an email but DEFRA suggest 'For information on any aspect of Defra's work' contact helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk so you can send helpful suggestions there.

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[1] UK forced to confront slippage on CO2 goal Environment Daily 1785, 08/12/04

[2] Officials are asked to "plan to replace or modify ozone-depleting fixed refrigeration, air-conditioning and fire protection equipment as it reaches the end of its life and ensure hydro fluorocarbons (HFCs) and other greenhouse gases are not used where safe, cost-effective and feasible alternatives are available" but the terms safe, cost-effective and feasible are not defined. (DEFRA press release Oct 6 2004 'New Buy Green Targets For Govt Procurement and Managers')

[3] See http://www.sft.no/english/news/dbafile12240.html

[4] See http://observer.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,6903,1312939,00.html

[5] At present governments are allowing HFCs to be used to replace uses of CFCs and HCFCs[5]. So far only about 30% of uses have been so substituted, and resulting HFC emissions comprise about 1.5% of total global warming. If all HCFCs and CFCs are replaced with HFCs, the figure will not be 1.5%, but 4.1% (the impact over 100 years), and over the critical next 20 years, 5.2%.[5]

By 2050, a 20 year time horizon in HFCs are expected to make up 8.6% of total global warming, doing as much damage to the climate as the traffic fumes of all the worlds private cars.

[6] The exceptions are HFCs in pepper sprays and non-domestic insecticides

[7] A survey of refrigerators has found all the top 85 refrigerators rated A++ for efficiency use hydrocrabons, not HFCs. Of 781 rated A+ appliances, eight do not list their refrigerant, while just four list the fluorinated refrigerant, HFC (HFC-134a is 1,300 times more potent than carbon dioxide). A+ and A++ appliances consume up to 64% less electricity than category A models. Source: 866 fridges made by 21 manufacturers that participate in the European Commission-supported Energy Plus initiative were surveyed by Greenpeace. See http://www.energy-plus.org/ and SAVING THE CLIMATE AS WELL AS THE ELECTRICITY BILL, Greenpeace Press Release, Brussels, 15 July 2004 http://eu.greenpeace.org/issues/climate.html

[8] NHS guidance is at the NICE website http://www.nice.org.uk/page.aspx?o=13449

[9] Thermo-King (Ingersoll Rand) C02 cyrogenic cooling of refrigerated trucks www.thermoking.com