

The regulation in context

Residential wood heat is a significant source of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) air pollution in B.C., accounting for approximately 15% of provincial PM_{2.5} emissions. The wood smoke contribution to pollutant levels measured in communities is often even greater, as wood smoke emissions occur at rooftop level.

In 1994, the Solid Fuel Burning Domestic Appliance Regulation (SFB DAR) was enacted under the *Environmental Management Act* for the purpose of reducing air pollution from domestic wood heating. The regulation sets PM emission standards applicable to certain solid fuel (wood and wood pellets) burning appliances sold in B.C. The Act and regulation are administered by the Ministry of Environment (the ministry).

While the SFB DAR has been successful in ensuring that the majority of wood and pellet stoves sold in B.C. are cleaner-burning certified models, several issues have become apparent with current provisions, including:

- The regulation exempts several categories of solid fuel burning appliances, such as outdoor wood boilers (OWBs, also known as hydronic heaters), forced air furnaces and wood-fired cook stoves from meeting emission standards; and
- The emission levels referenced in the regulation no longer represent best available technology for reducing PM emissions from domestic wood heating.

Consultations on revising the SFB DAR

In 2010 the ministry released an intentions paper outlining a comprehensive approach to revising the regulation and inviting comment on the proposal. The intentions paper and a summary of public comments received can be found at the ministry's [wood-burning appliance regulatory review website](#).

The regulatory review process was then deferred in favour of waiting to harmonize with revised wood heater standards expected to be released by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) in 2012. The revised standards were finally released in 2015.

Key Points

The revisions are intended to:

- ➔ Improve air quality in populated areas by reducing emissions of wood smoke from home heating
- ➔ Regulate the sale of wood burning appliances to ensure that only cleaner models are sold in B.C.
- ➔ Harmonize with new wood heater emission standards released by the US Environmental Protection Agency
- ➔ Establish a sunset date for the use of high-emitting outdoor wood boilers

Details of the proposed revisions

1. Wood and pellet boilers

Beginning in 2016, it is proposed that only wood and pellet boilers certified to meet either the new US EPA emissions standards for boilers (Title 40, Part 60, Subpart QQQQ) or the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) B415.1 emission standards will be legal to sell in B.C. There will be a three month period during which vendors will be allowed to sell existing stock that does not meet the new standards.

In addition, the ministry proposes to limit the installation of OWBs to sites that are more than 30 metres from any property line. New OWBs will be limited to larger lots in rural areas, where impacts on neighbours are less likely. This property line setback is consistent with the approach taken in many US states. It recognizes that even cleaner burning OWBs can cause problems on smaller lots due to their short chimneys, higher emissions relative to most wood stoves, and cycling operation. Pellet or chip-fired OWBs will be allowed to be installed with only a 10 metre setback. Vendors of OWBs will be required to inform purchasers of the new installation requirements.

The ministry is also proposing to phase out the use of OWBs that do not meet either the US EPA standard, the CSA standard or qualify for the US EPA White Tag Program. Prior to the phase-out, a ten-year grace period will be in place to recognize the investment of those who may have recently installed an OWB. Thus, the use of these non-conforming OWBs will be phased out by 2026. Non-conforming OWBs that are located more than 75 metres from any property line and more than 150 metres from any school or hospital will be exempt from the phase-out.

2. Wood and pellet furnaces

Beginning in 2017, it is proposed that only wood and pellet fired forced air furnaces certified to meet either the new US EPA emissions standards for furnaces (Title 40, Part 60, Subpart QQQQ) or the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) B415.1 emission standards will be legal to sell in B.C.

3. Wood stoves, pellet stoves and other solid fuel appliances

The ministry proposes to broaden the SFB DAR definition of “appliance” to capture a broader range of devices. Beginning in 2016, wood or pellet fired appliances other than boilers or furnaces will only be legal to sell in B.C. if they are certified to meet either the new US EPA standards (Title 40, Part 60, Subpart AAA) or the CSA B415.1 standards for particulate matter emissions. There will be a three month period during which vendors of appliances will be allowed sell existing stock that does not meet the new standards.

Under the ministry’s proposal, a few niche categories of solid fuel appliances will continue to be exempted from emission standards. Exempted appliances will include site-built masonry fireplaces, masonry stoves, wood cook stoves and portable camp stoves. In each case, the exempt appliances will be narrowly defined to minimize the opportunity for regulated appliances to be characterized as exempt. None of the proposed types of exempted appliances are sold or built in sufficient numbers in B.C. to be major contributors to air pollution.

4. Solid fuel

The ministry proposes to include in the regulation a definition of acceptable fuel for wood heating appliances. Acceptable fuel would include untreated seasoned wood products, pelletized fuel and fire logs. The effect of this revised definition will be to prohibit burning of undesirable fuels, such as garbage, plastics and treated wood. The use of paper and cardboard to start fires will continue to be allowed.

5. Compliance

Under the ministry’s proposal, manufacturers, distributors and retailers of solid fuel appliances will not be required to conduct additional emissions testing specifically to sell in the B.C. market. Rather, they will be required to have records and appliance labelling to demonstrate that emissions testing has been undertaken and certification achieved. The labelling and record keeping requirements are similar to the current SFB DAR. In addition, vendors of OWBs will be responsible for maintaining records showing that they have informed purchasers of OWB installation and phase-out requirements.

The path forward

The ministry proposes to revise the regulation as outlined in this information update. The target date for completion of the revisions is spring 2016.

Comments or questions about the ministry’s revised proposal may be submitted to the ministry at the email or mailing address listed below. Comments received by **November 16th, 2015** will be considered by the ministry in preparing the amendments to the SFB DAR.

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