

Maine moves to cut greenhouse gases

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Maine moves to cut greenhouse gases

AUGUSTA — The Maine Board of Environmental Protection has approved the first of many rules expected to pass in an ongoing effort to reduce the statewide emission of greenhouse gases. The board on Thursday voted in favor of a new requirement that paper mills, power plants, and factories track greenhouse gas emissions and report the data to the state Department of Environmental Protection.

Though the federal government does require reporting of air pollutants, a handful of states, including New Jersey and Connecticut, require businesses to track greenhouse gases.

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Maine's rule will impose stricter reporting requirements for a long list of federally regulated air pollutants. Emissions of such substances as ammonia, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and several other greenhouse gases will have to be reported beginning July 1, 2005.

With the rule in place, the environmental department will start collecting accurate data on Maine's contribution to global climate change to eventually use in building incentive programs for reducing greenhouse gases, said Sue Jones of the Natural Resources Council of Maine, Maine's largest environmental lobby.

"We need to charge in and start gathering this data," said board member Henry Hilton of Starks.

The law, which was approved by legislators last year, also set up a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the state.

During the meeting, the environmental board also approved new restrictions on the use of solvents, requiring a switch to products that do not easily evaporate.

The board held a public hearing on a proposed rule banning the sale of household products from cosmetics to cleaning supplies with high levels of volatile organic compounds, chemicals that evaporate easily and contribute to the formation of ground-level ozone.

The rule is similar to laws on the books in California, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware.

The new rule should cost the average Maine consumer no more than 50 cents per year, said environmental department spokeswoman Andrea Lani.