

APP203827 Proposal to amend the Fire Fighting Chemicals Group Standard 2017

Submission Reference no: 17

as above, Air New Zealand (Marty Forsman)

Submitter Type: Not specified
Source: Web Form
Overall Position: Support in Part

Overall Notes:

Clause

What is the reason for making the submission?

Notes

Air New Zealand is pleased to submit to this review. Air New Zealand (Air NZ) holds AFFF at three locations in New Zealand associated with aircraft maintenance activities, and over recent years have working closely with the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) on our choice of AFFF and associated storage implications. Throughout 2017/ 2018 Air NZ undertook a full review of its AFFF stocks in consultation with EPA. Non-compliant foams identified at Auckland Airport were removed and replaced by system compatible, compliant C6 foams, supported by the EPA and purchased by Air New Zealand. All foam currently held by Air NZ complies with the requirements of the current Fire Fighting Chemical Group Standard. The move to fluorine free foam (F3) within the timescales proposed has significant impacts on Air NZ operations, and is an unanticipated development following our 2017/2018 replacement programme. Air NZ does not have the infrastructure to achieve full containment in the case of a major deluge event at one site. Given the age and nature of the site this is a significant project that needs to align with capital work plans. We have existing plans for the building of new facilities, and appropriate containment has been planned for this new build. However, our current facilities will not meet these compliance requirements before 2025. Air New Zealand submits that the timeline for full containment needs to be extended from 2020 to 2025. Alternatively, we submit that exemptions should be permitted, and the terms associated with such exemptions should be clearly set out as part of this consultation. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with the EPA as may assist.

Clause

Do you wish to speak at a hearing?

Position

Yes

Notes

Clause

What is your preferred outcome of this consultation?

Notes

a) That any proposed changes are reasonable, pragmatic and provide surety to industry. Timelines for change must be achievable. b) Going forward the EPA communicates with industry in a timely and proactive manner as relates to emerging contaminants in the future c) That regulation will not inadvertently create future problems arising from potentially harmful constituents in fluorine-free foams.

Clause

Do you consider there are any applications for which fluorine-free foams are not suitable or do not have relevant approvals? If yes, please specify.

Position

No

Notes

Clause

What do you think of the practicality of these disposal provisions, in terms of the resources and costs involved?

Notes

We would like to see a New Zealand disposal solution in order to reduce the considerable costs involved in shipping waste offshore. Essentially, the EPA must process the necessary disposal permits in a timely manner. Delays in the issuing of permits increases cost and risk.

Clause

Would your business be able to contain all foam wastes?

Position

No

Notes

An Air NZ site does not currently have the infrastructure to achieve full containment in the case of a major deluge event. Given the age and nature of the site this is a significant project that needs to align with capital work plans. We have existing plans for build of new facilities, and appropriate containment has been planned for this new build. However, our current facilities will not meet compliance requirements before 2025. The proposed timeline for full containment must be extended from 2020 to 2025. Alternatively, exemptions should be allowed and the terms associated with such exemptions should be clearly set out as part of this consultation.

Clause

If not, is this due to cost or practical difficulties?

Notes

Both. To achieve full containment of foam waste will require design and significant capital which needs to be planned and allocated. A more reasonable transition period needs to be adopted or exemptions allowed.

Clause

Do you have any concerns about fluorine-free foams potentially containing other persistent, toxic and/or bioaccumulative compounds?

Position

Yes - please specify

Notes

'We don't know what we don't know'. Until now we have considered C6 foams to be an alternative to C8 foams. We are also concerned that EPA has not provided advice on the concentration of fluorine in a foam that classifies as fluorine free. Material safety data sheets are generally silent or vague on fluorine content, even in PFAS based foams i.e. what is fluorine free?

Clause

Do you agree with phasing out C6 AFFF at the same timeframe as C8 AFFF?

Position

No - please tell us why

Notes

In 2018 at significant cost, and EPA oversight, Air NZ changed out its stock of C8 AFFF to C6 AFFF on the basis it was doing 'the right thing'. The information provided by EPA does not provide a science-based argument for the phasing out of all PFAS based foams. Removal of foams containing PFOS and POFA as POPs is understand but as yet we have not been provided with a clear science against the use of C6.

Clause

Which is your preferred option?

Position

Grant permissions to continue to use C6 foams

Notes

If in use, continue a provision allowing C6 foams for the life of the product before replacement with fluorine free foams subject to full containment. As stated above, a longer transition phase - 2025 - must be introduced to achieve full containment of foam wastes.

Clause

What are your reasons?

Notes

The capital works required for containment are significant, and costs being many millions. It is not reasonable to require full compliance by 2020. Air New Zealand submits that compliance by 2025 would allow build and maintenance required to sit more appropriately in capital plans.

Clause

Can you estimate the cost to your business of phasing out C6 AFFF?

Position

Yes - please specify

Notes

Based on our experience to date, these costs would be significant likely many millions though not yet finally quantified. It not only includes the cost for high volume replacement and disposal of C6 AFFF at multiple sites but also the high likelihood for significant infrastructure costs due to the age and nature of these sites.

Clause

Do you have any other comments to make about the proposed amendments?

Notes

We ask the EPA to provide certainty around the acceptable residual levels of contamination that can be left within fire-fighting systems.

The submitter have elected to withhold their personal details from publication.