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ARB controls use of potent chemicals that contribute to global warming

SACRAMENTO -- The Air Resources Board today adopted regulations to control, and in some cases phase out, potent chemicals used in the manufacture of computer chips and other industries that contribute to global warming at many times greater than carbon dioxide.

"These chemicals, though used in small quantities, pose a danger to the planet because they have such a high capacity to trap atmospheric heat," said ARB Chairman Mary Nichols. "We developed these regulations in concert with the industries that use them. They are cost-efficient ways of fighting climate change that will promote the use of less damaging alternatives."

A single pound of the greenhouse gases addressed in the regulations traps heat in the atmosphere at levels ranging from 6,500 to 23,900 times the ability of a single pound of carbon dioxide. A pound of sulfur hexafluoride released into the atmosphere has the same amount of heat-trapping potential as 10 metric tons of carbon dioxide or driving 25,000 miles – the equivalent of circling the globe.

The semiconductor regulation sets new maximum allowable greenhouse gas emission limits for the use of a variety of greenhouse gases from the manufacture of computer chips and related operations. The regulation, which also requires additional reporting and record-keeping of the controlled gases, is estimated to cost approximately \$21 to prevent the equivalent of a single ton of carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere. Approximately 85 operations, mostly based in the Silicon Valley, will be affected by these regulations.

The second regulation directly regulates the use of sulfur hexafluoride, the most potent of the fluorinated gases, in applications other than for electric utilities and computer chip manufacture such as magnesium casting and where it is used as a cover gas during production. Designed to phase out the use of the gas (except in certain exempted applications) over several years, the regulation has an estimated cost per metric ton of carbon dioxide equivalent reduced of approximately \$2.

The regulations are part of a series of discrete early actions as called for under AB 32, California's pioneering climate change legislation signed in 2006, and will be in force starting in 2010. Both regulations were developed over the past year using a public process that included working and technical groups, public workshops, and meetings with industry associations, individual companies and air districts.

The regulations taken together are estimated to prevent the equivalent of the carbon dioxide emissions from 56,000 cars driven for a year in 2020.

The Air Resources Board is a department of the California Environmental Protection Agency. ARB's mission is to promote and protect public health, welfare, and ecological resources through effective reduction of air pollutants while recognizing and considering effects on the economy. The ARB oversees all air pollution control efforts in California to attain and maintain health based air quality standards.

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