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Air pollution control/ Combustion plants

Small combustion plants ordinance enters into force on 22 March 2010

Ordinance lays foundation for a long-term reduction in dust pollution

As of 22 March 2010 onwards new environmental provisions will apply to wood-fired heating systems, stoves and other small combustion plants fired with solid fuels. Wood is a renewable energy source and therefore an appropriate fuel for heat generation in terms of climate protection. However, burning wood in small combustion plants indoors releases various air pollutants such as particulate matter and leads to unpleasant odours – and this to an increasing extent. The new limit values will reduce air pollutants directly at the source. As Federal Environment Minister Norbert Röttgen said: “They ensure better air quality, improved health and quality of life. Thus they are an important component of our sustainable environmental policy”. The amendment to the First Ordinance on the Implementation of the Federal Immission Control Act (1. BImSchV) adapts the provisions governing stoves and heating systems fired with solid fuels such as wood to the technological progress achieved with regard to reducing pollutant emissions.

“The amendment to the Ordinance on small combustion plants replaced the totally outdated technical provisions governing stoves and wood-fired heating systems of 1988. It makes the use of best available technology obligatory,” stated Jochen Flasbarth, President of the Federal Environment Agency (UBA).

The provisions in detail:

The 1. BImSchV provides for stringent emission limit values for dust. Modern combustion plants usually used indoors such as heating systems, stoves or tiled stove inserts can comply with these new limit values without additional dust filters. Setting more progressive limit values for carbon monoxide will result in the use of improved combustion technologies which in turn will also reduce unpleasant odours in the neighbourhood.

Limit values have also been set for existing combustion plants. If compliance with these limit values can be proven either by a manufacturer certificate or by an on-the-spot-measurement,

these firing systems can be operated for an unlimited period. Only if compliance is not possible will a retrofitting programme take effect between 2014 and 2024. It provides for retrofitting or replacement by low-emission plants.

So-called masonry heaters, cooking stoves, baking ovens, bathing furnaces, fireplaces and stoves installed before 1950 are excluded from the retrofitting programme. Stoves which do not serve as additional heating systems but as the sole heating system for flats or houses are excluded as well.

The combustion plant itself is not always to blame if clouds of smoke appear out of a chimney. Many people do not have the necessary knowledge and experience to operate their combustion plants properly. Therefore the 1. BimSchV stipulates that operators must be advised on the proper handling of such combustion plants and the solid fuels to be used. In addition, wood fuel will be checked regularly for quality in the framework of other monitoring tasks.

The amendment will considerably lower the costs for operators of oil and natural gas heating systems: the intervals between regular checks will be longer. The annual checks previously carried out will be reduced to checks every third or every other year. This takes account of the technical progress achieved in oil and natural gas heating systems, which are significantly more reliable today than they were 20 years ago.

For more information see:

www.bmu.de/luftreinhaltung/downloads/doc/39616.php (in German)

Background information on 1. BimSchV:

www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-medien-e/mysql_medien.php?anfrage=Kennummer&Suchwort=3776 (in German)

Guide on proper and clean heating:

www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-medien-e/mysql_medien.php?anfrage=Kennummer&Suchwort=3151 (in German)

Dessau-Roßlau, 19 March 2010