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EPA Finalizes Revision to RCRA Hazardous Waste Program to Promote Sustainable Recycling of Oil-Bearing Materials Into Fuel

By allowing certain secondary materials to be recycled for additional fuel production, EPA is helping petroleum refineries to reduce waste and capture more energy from each barrel of oil.

Action

EPA is revising the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act's (RCRA) oil-bearing hazardous secondary materials exclusion to allow for the recycling of oil-bearing hazardous secondary materials, such as sludges or other byproducts, generated by the petroleum industry when they are gasified at a petroleum refinery for the production of synthesis gas fuel.

Gasification will join distillation, catalytic cracking, and fractionation as recognized petroleum refining processes. This exclusion is conditioned on there being no land placement and no speculative accumulation of the material prior to re-inserting into the petroleum refining process. EPA also has finalized a regulatory definition of gasification specific to this exclusion.

Gasification is a commercially proven technology that is used in a variety of manufacturing operations. It converts carbon-containing materials, such as coal or petroleum coke, into carbon monoxide and hydrogen gas. This gas, known as synthesis gas, can be converted into usable products such as hydrogen, steam, electricity, ammonia and other chemicals. In the petroleum refining operations, electric power generation is the application of choice for manufactured synthesis gas.

Background

In August 1998, EPA promulgated an exclusion from the definition of solid waste for oil-bearing hazardous secondary materials generated at a petroleum refinery that are recycled by being re-inserted into the petroleum refining process (63 FR 42110). EPA proposed in March 2002 a separate conditional exclusion for these same materials that added gasification to the list of recognized petroleum refining processes (67 FR 13684). As part of this proposal, EPA also solicited comment on a number of other conditions in addition to the prohibition on land placement and speculative accumulation. In response to the proposal, commenters generally agreed

with the idea of promoting the reuse of secondary materials from petroleum refineries to produce additional fuels through gasification. Today's action amends and finalizes the 2002 proposal.

For More Information

For more information, visit: <http://www.epa.gov/wastes/hazard/wastetypes/wasteid/gas.htm>.

To find out more detailed information or to ask a question, visit

<http://waste.custhelp.com> and click on Find an Answer or Submit a Question.