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EPA SETS NOISE
CEILING FOR
GARBAGE TRUCKS

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has announced standards which limit the noise from newly manufactured garbage trucks.

The Congress, through the Noise Control Act of 1972, directed EPA to reduce noise from major sources to levels that would protect the public health and welfare. As part of the Agency's continuing actions to reduce environmental noise, EPA Assistant Administrator David G. Hawkins said today that all truck-mounted solid waste compactor vehicles manufactured after October 1, 1980, will not be allowed to emit a noise level in excess of 79 decibels measured at seven (7) meters (23 feet). The permissible level is reduced further to 76 decibels for vehicles made after July 1, 1982.

Reduction of the noise of garbage trucks should reduce urban and residential noise levels and the long-term impact on people exposed to the noise, as well as the disruption of speech communication and sleep. EPA estimates that this regulation will result in a 74 percent decrease in the extent and magnitude of the adverse effects from refuse vehicle noise by 1991.

"In addition to giving relief to the approximately 19 million people in this country who are adversely affected by high levels of noise from refuse compaction," Hawkins said, "the new regulation will bring the extra benefit of saving fuel."

"The reason for this is that a principal method for reducing the noise of the vehicle during compaction operations is to reduce the speed of the engine running the compactor. This will result in less

(more)

fuel usage. When all the refuse collection vehicles meet the noise standard, the operators will be saving, every year, about two million gallons of gasoline, and over a million gallons of diesel oil."

Some garbage trucks now on the road have noise levels greater than 90 decibels, more than twice as loud as the standard EPA is imposing. "Nevertheless," Hawkins said, "the technology is available to make a refuse vehicle even quieter than EPA's proposed standard."

"Some of the new refuse collection vehicles in New York and San Francisco right now are achieving a 74 decibel level," Hawkins said.

This regulation does not require refuse haulers to replace their fleets with quieter vehicles.

"EPA," Hawkins said, "is leaving to state and local authorities the problem of regulating the noise of clanking cans and shouting personnel during collection operations."

This element of the garbage collection noise problem has been solved in a number of city neighborhoods by the substitution of plastic cans and bags for steel garbage cans. In commercial collections, the larger containers that are more durable than a home container have been quieted through use of non-metal covers.

In such cases, EPA recommends that local authorities require that noise reducing materials, such as rubber or plastic, be applied to the steel containers to deaden their acoustic properties.

EPA estimates that the list price of new refuse vehicles should not go up more than ten percent to cover the cost of added noise reducing technology in the vehicle.

Those increased costs, passed on to the consumer, could result in an increase in collection costs of about one-half percent, by EPA estimate. For example, a family paying refuse collection costs of \$100 a year would pay an additional 50 cents per year.

(more)

Truck manufacturers are free to use any technology they like to meet the new standard. In general, however, they will be quieting the three principal sources of noise: the engine, the power takeoff and the compactor mechanism.

Most garbage trucks use the same engine that powers the truck as the source of power to drive the compactor. Slowing down the engine's speed during compacting will be one way to reduce the noise. This can be done without increasing compaction time by increasing the capacity of the hydraulic pump which powers the compaction mechanism.

The second source of noise, the power takeoff, is used to transfer the engine's power to this same hydraulic pump. Technology is available to make quieter power takeoff units than most now in use.

A third way of reducing noise is to cushion the parts of the compactor that meet during operation of the mechanism.

The new regulation will be published in the Federal Register of October 1, 1979.

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