

AB 32: California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006

California Climate Choices

AB 32, the California Global Warming Solutions Act, was passed by the state legislature and signed into law by Governor Schwarzenegger in 2006. AB 32 sets in place the nation's most comprehensive, economy-wide global warming pollution reduction program.

AB 32 requires the state's global warming pollution to be reduced to 1990 levels by 2020. This reduction will be accomplished through an enforceable and declining statewide cap on global warming emissions that will be phased in starting in 2012. In order to effectively implement the cap, AB 32 directs the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to develop appropriate regulations and establish a mandatory reporting system to track and monitor global warming emissions levels.

MANDATORY EMISSIONS REPORTING

In 2008, CARB adopted regulations creating a statewide global warming emissions reporting and monitoring system. Starting on April 1, 2009, the state's largest global warming emitters (those who emit more than 25,000 metric tons per year of carbon dioxide) are required to report their annual emissions to CARB.

SETTING THE CAP

In 2008, CARB also determined what the level of global warming emissions was in 1990. This is the emissions cap that must be met by 2020.

REDUCTIONS

In December 2008, CARB adopted a blueprint to achieve the state's 2020 climate goal. This blueprint, called the Scoping Plan, includes a broad set of clean energy, clean transportation, efficiency, and other standards. The plan also calls for the development of a regional cap-and-trade program. Roughly 80 percent of the needed reductions will come from regulations such as a 33% renewable energy standard, a strong global warming standard for cars and trucks, and a new Low

Carbon Fuel Standard. The remaining 20 percent will come from a market-based cap and trade program in which polluters must obtain an allowance for every ton of global warming pollution they emit. CARB will conduct detailed rulemaking processes from 2009-2011 to develop and adopt these policies. Ultimately, California is committed to reducing its global warming pollution 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050.

IMPLEMENTING REGULATIONS

On or before January 1, 2011, CARB must officially adopt specific regulations to achieve the global warming emission reductions. These regulations must be in effect by the start of 2012. AB 32 requires CARB to ensure that regulations to reduce global warming emissions meet several criteria. To the extent feasible, the regulations must:

- ensure that global warming emissions reductions are real, permanent, quantifiable, verifiable, enforceable and additional (i.e. reductions that would not have otherwise occurred);
- maximize benefits to California;
- encourage early action;
- not disproportionately impact low-income communities;
- complement, and not interfere with, efforts to achieve and maintain federal and state air quality standards and reduce toxic air pollution emissions; and
- minimize leakage (where reductions in global warming emissions within California are offset by increases in emissions outside the state).

UCS INVOLVEMENT

UCS is actively engaged with CARB and various stakeholders to help create science-based and effective policies for achieving the global warming emissions reductions required by AB 32

The Union of Concerned Scientists is the leading science-based nonprofit working for a healthy environment and a safer world.