

# Lowering The Cost Of Clean Air

by *W. Henson Moore*

(NAPSA)—In 1961 American author Joseph Heller wrote his award-winning war satire "Catch-22". The title refers to a situation whose desired outcome is impossible because of illogical rules governing the situation. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has a whopper of a Catch-22 in its New Source Review (NSR) program. The program applies to businesses, but if it applied to everyday citizens here's how it might play out:

Let's say your car passes its annual emissions inspection and a few months later you decide to spend \$20 on a new oil filter. You apply to the EPA for a permit for the new filter. After 18 months of waiting around, the EPA gets back to you. They tell you they have completed an environmental impact study of your new oil filter and have concluded the new filter will make your car operate more efficiently. Good news? Not to the EPA. They further conclude this means you will begin driving your car much more, thus polluting more. To guard against these potential increased emissions, EPA makes you install a new catalytic converter which costs \$350.

Makes you want to get a few more miles out of the old oil filter, doesn't it?

Now imagine that Catch-22 on an industrial scale. After decades of bureaucratic tinkering, NSR has become a stumbling block to the routine maintenance that keeps a plant operating safely, and even for simple projects that would have clear environmental and energy benefits.



For example, a paper mill wanted to change its boiler to reduce air pollution and save about \$1 million per year on the plant's natural gas bill. But the EPA said the change would increase "potential emissions" at the plant and demanded the installation of \$17 million worth of pollution control technologies to "reduce" these phony "potential emissions." Of course, the project was killed—nobody is going to invest \$17 million to save \$1 million.

Now, President Bush is poised to announce much-needed NSR reforms. Without even looking at the President's proposals, environmental activists have declared any change to the program will harm the environment. It's time to clear the air about NSR reform. Environmental regulations should encourage companies to reduce pollution, not force them to abandon beneficial projects.

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