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DENR warns households against use of disinfectants with HFCs

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by [Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz](#)

As disinfectants become one of the most in-demand products in the market due to the coronavirus pandemic, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Roy Cimatu has aired its warning to Filipino households against the use of disinfectants containing hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), which are considered the fastest growing greenhouse gases (GHG) that contribute significantly to climate change.

Aside from disinfectants, HFCs are also used in hair sprays, deodorants, and insecticides to act as propellant.

“By choosing not to buy products containing HFCs, consumers will be reducing GHG levels and sending a message to companies not to continue to use the propellant in their products,” Cimatu said.

The DENR chief issued the statement in support of the awareness-raising efforts of its Environmental Management Bureau, through the Philippine Ozone Desk (POD).

POD facilitates and coordinates projects and policies on the phaseout of ozone-depleting substances (ODS) pursuant to the country’s commitment to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol.

The Kigali Amendment is an international agreement to gradually reduce the consumption and production of HFCs, which replaced the ozone-destroying chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) previously used in air conditioners and refrigerants.

However, HFCs were later found to be powerful GHG that can be hundreds to thousands of times more potent than carbon dioxide in contributing to climate change per unit of mass.

POD public awareness officer Joylan Nephi Babia said that while most of the aerosols available in the market today are free from ODS, some products still use the alternative HFCs which contribute to global warming.

Babia warned that HFCs have “high or very high” global warming potentials ranging from 12 to 14,800.

He cited in particular HFC 134a used as propellant in disinfectant sprays, which has a “global warming potential of 1,300 on a 100-year time scale.”

“While HFCs are not ODS, HFCs are known to aggravate global warming,” Babia said as he urged consumers to look closely at the labels of disinfectant sprays they will buy, and “as much as possible, use these products sparingly.”

He also advised consumers to use instead disinfectant sprays that use either LPG or hydrocarbons such as propane, butane, and isobutane as propellant, saying these are more environment-friendly having low global warming potentials.

Since HFCs are vital alternative to CFCs, they cannot be removed from the market immediately.

<https://mb.com.ph/2020/10/27/denr-warns-households-against-use-of-disinfectants-with-hfcs/#:~:text=Babia%20warned%20that%20HFCs%20have,100%2Dyear%20time%20scale.%E2%80%9D>