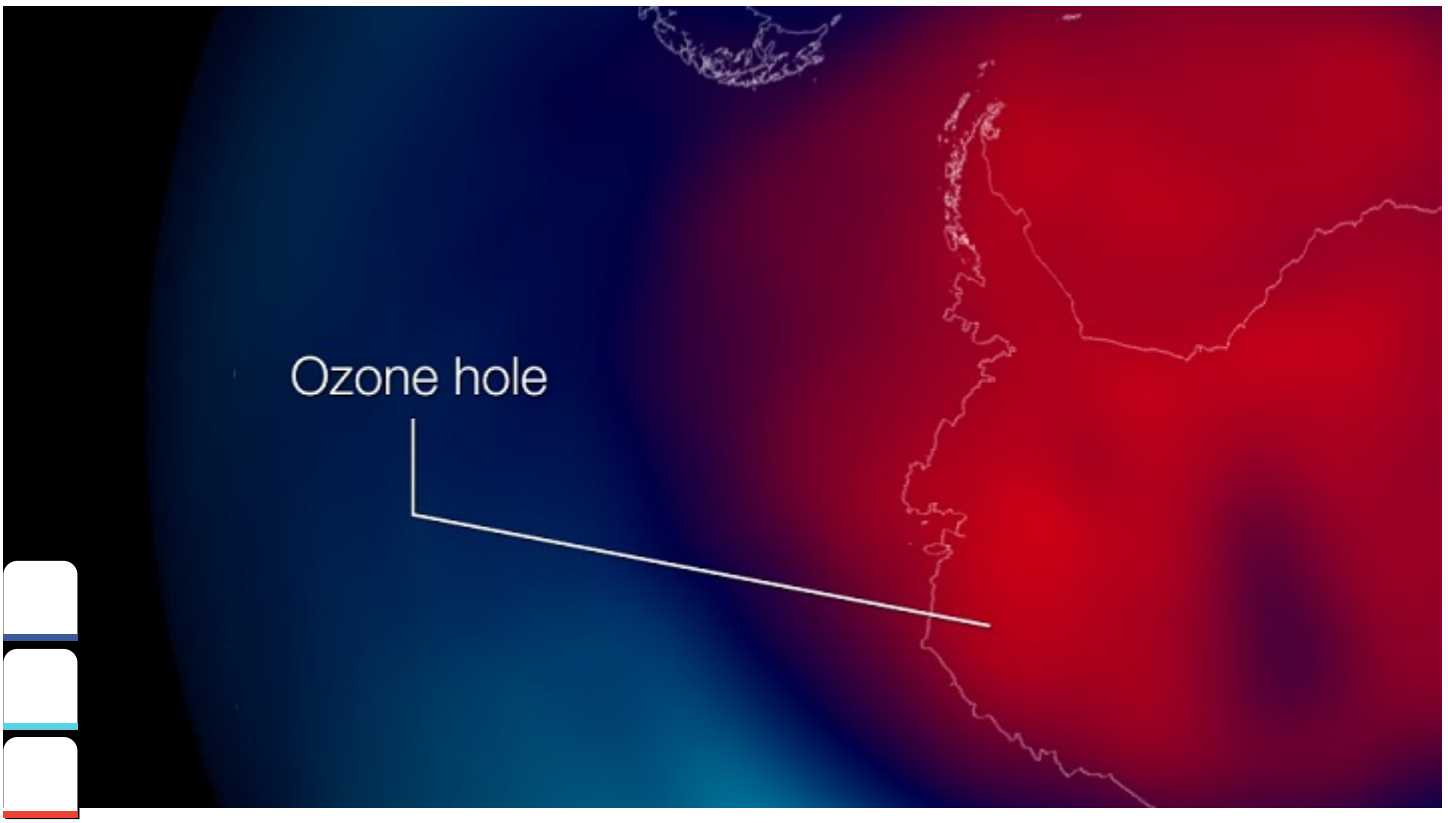

Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS) phase out in the Cook Islands

This year, 2012 is the 25th Anniversary of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the treaty this project is based on. This protocol is considered to be one of the most successful environmental treaties in the world. Through global enlistment, it has sucessfully phased out chlorofluorocarbons (CFC's) and is phasing out hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFC's) right now.

Since its creation, scientists have noted that further depletion of the ozone layer has diminished compared to the depletion that would have taken place had controls not been placed on the ozone depleting substances. By now, the ozone layer would have been depleted by up to two thirds its original cover.

An update on the Ozone Project

The Cook Islands is now at the stage of implementing the HCFC Phase out Management Plan (HPMP). This will require adherance to the Environment Act (Ozone Layer Protection) Regulations 2008 in which those importing ozone depleting substances into the Cook Islands will have to apply for a permit to do so. **The import permit application can be downloaded on page 4**.

In addition to this, the National Ozone Unit is working on updating the regulation to include the provision of a Technicians Licence for service technicians to have in order to service equipment containing ozone depleting substances legally. This measure includes the requirement for technicians to attend 'Good Practices in Refrigeration' training and refreshers. This training covers the proper handling of the ozone depleting substances and education on the effects of the substances so that technicians will become more mindful that they need to avoid as much as possible, any gas leakages or discharges into the atmosphere.

The other new provisions is to create a quota system for amounts of ozone depleting substances imported by each company. This quota is set to decrease over time to eventual phase out. Premises or companies that store and/or sell ozone depleting substances will also have to be permitted to do so and will need to fill particular criteria to obtain a permit to sell or store ozone depleting substances. The requirement for licences or permits to sell and store ozone depleting substances will also be added to the regulation.

All these additions need to become implemented into the Cook Islands law to fulfil our obligations to the Vienna Convention and the Montreal Protocol. As the Cook Islands are a Party to these treaties, so shall the Cook Island follow the protocols put in place to reduce and phase out ozone depleting substances.

Below is the basic workplan for the National Ozone Unit. ODS refers to ozone depleting substances.

WORKPLAN

INDUSTRY

From the 5th to the 9th of December 2011 the Ozone Depleting Substances Project conducted the 'Good Practices in Refrigeration' training for technicians based in Rarotonga and Aitutaki with one flown in to Rarotonga from Mitiaro. The course was conducted by the in-house techncian of the Fiji National Ozone Unit. This is in preparation for the new regulation amendments and to also create awareness of ozone depletion amongst technicians. It was felt this was a very successful training that made technicians more aware of ozone depletion and reinforced the practice of minimising the release of HCFC's into the air. Now, the technicians are beginning to form an association.

Importers Permits
ODS Import Permit for the importation of bulk ODS – existing
ODS Equipment Import Permit for the importation of appliances that contain ODS – may be introduced to monitor all amounts of gases coming in and track ODS based equipment

Technicians Licenses
Technicians Licence for the handling and use of ODS
Technicians training 'Good Practices in Refrigeration'

Quota System
Based on a system whereby import figures for 2009 and 2010 are collated and divided amongst importers into their standing percentages of the total. This is set to decrease over the years to eventual complete phase out in 2020 (Option 2 in HPMP) or 2040 (Option 1 in HPMP).

Option 1: Montreal Protocol, reductions in HCFC's
– 2015: 10% reduction
– 2020: 35% reduction
– 2025: 67.5% reduction
– Over next 10 years: 97.5% reduction

Option 2: The preferred option of the National Ozone Unit
– 2013: ban of HCFC equipment imports and 15% reduction of HCFC for servicing existing equipment
The idea here is that if HCFC based equipment is banned there won't be an increase of HCFC imports, it will just be the servicing of existing units that will come to the end of their

life most likely by 2020. In addition to this, a survey of household refrigerators showed that already 94.1% of those households surveyed are already non HCFC based.

CUSTOMS

From the 29th November to the 1st of December 2011, a customs training took place in order to train Customs officers to identify and monitor ozone depleting substances and also methods of smuggling. There is some concern with the upcoming HCFC Phase out, that smuggling will start to occur.

NES – National Ozone Unit

Establish and operate permit, licence and quota systems (the licensing system)
Establish an ODS 'fund' for the safe disposal of ODS.

The National Ozone Officer and the Director of the National Environment Service attended the Joint Conference of the Parties to the Vienna Convention and the Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol in Bali from the 21st to the 25th of November 2011. Invaluable information and experience was gathered at this conference to better understand global ozone depleting issues and also to observe how the larger developed and developing countries have opposing views on issues. During a discussion the National Environment Service Director made a most impressive statement on behalf of the Cook Islands to support the issue of monitoring Hydroflurocarbons (HFC) which are not ozone depleting but have a much higher global warming potential than ODS and carbon dioxide.

Montreal Protocol And The Vienna Convention

The Montreal Protocol is an implementation mechanism under the international agreement the Vienna Convention that is designed to eliminate the production and consumption of harmful ozone depleting substances. Some examples of these substances include chemicals such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), halons, carbon tetrachloride and methyl bromide which have many applications including

refrigeration, air conditioning, cleaning electronic components, solvents, fire extinguishers, and quarantine and pre-shipment cargo.

Cook Islands and the Montreal Protocol

The Cook Islands became party to the Montreal Protocol on the 22nd December 2003. Prior to this, work done in the country with regards to implementation of the Montreal Protocol were a one-day workshop for government departments and small industrial enterprises conducted by SPREP in 1999. A five-day assessment on the current consumption of ozone depleting substances was conducted by SPREP and the National Environment Service between August and September 2004. The findings of this assessment were used to develop a National Compliance Action Plan (NCAP) for the Cook Islands, which was completed in October 2004. The lead agency responsible for implementing and managing the NCAP programme will be the National Compliance Centre (NCC) in the National Environment Service. However, given the complexity and cross-sector nature of the plan, it will be necessary for the NCC to collaborate with a number of other agencies and organisations, the principal ones being:

Customs Department

The Customs Department will enforce proposed regulations controlling the importation of ozone depleting substances. Data recorded of all imports detailing the type and amount of ozone depleting substances entering the country would be stored at the Customs department under their current arrangements with the Statistics Department and collated by the NCC office for data reporting needs.

Refrigeration technicians

Refrigeration technicians will be involved in the training and certification courses for trainers and future technicians will need to be licensed to handle, capture, and recycle ozone depleting substances.

The NCC will also work closely with personnel in the National Environment Service dealing with climate change and waste related conventions (Stockholm, Persistent Organic Pollutants, Rotterdam, Basel, Waigani etc) towards a harmonised approach to controlling consumption of and trade in environmentally harmful substances.

Regional Strategy to Implement the Montreal Protocol (on Substances that deplete the Ozone Layer) in the Pacific

The Cook Islands Ozone Depleting Substances Project is the result of an approved "Regional Strategy to Implement the Montreal Protocol (on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer) in the Pacific". The Cook Islands are one of three additional countries (alongside Niue and Nauru) to join the Regional Strategy in 2006. The Regional Strategy is co-coordinated by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP).

Goal: To completely phase-out the use of the most commonly used and harmful ozone depleting substances, CFCs, by the year 2006.

1) To strengthen institutions by establishing National Compliance Centres in all core and additional countries of the Regional Strategy;

2) To establish national controls (regulations, licensing and monitoring systems) on the import of ozone depleting substances;

3) To build capacity through training programmes on “good practices in refrigeration” (for refrigeration technicians) and on “control of ozone depleting substances imports” (for customs officers).

Action Plan And Projects Under The NCAP

In order to ensure the Cook Islands’ compliance with the Montreal Protocol the following Action Plan has been developed.

1. Maintain compliance with the Montreal Protocol while preparing an economically viable accelerated phase-out program.
2. Establish a National Compliance Centre (NCC) office to co-ordinate, implement, and monitor the phase-out program.
3. Prohibit any new activity related to the import, production or use of ODSs in new equipment.
4. Ban of import of ozone depleting substance-using and ozone depleting substances-containing equipment (including new and second-hand domestic refrigerators using CFC-12 as the refrigerant).
5. Introduction of controls on the import (and export) of all ODSs (including licensing, taxation and/or quotas as appropriate).
6. Strengthening ozone depleting substances import/export monitoring program by developing a licensing system.
7. Consideration of a system of fiscal incentives/disincentives in favour of non-ozone depleting substances alternatives and transitional substances.
8. Implement and monitor training of customs officers to ensure proper control of import and export of ozone depleting substances and information collection and submission.
9. Implement and monitor training of refrigeration service technicians on good practices in refrigeration to minimise the use of ozone depleting substances and mitigate their emissions into the air during the service of refrigerators.
10. Conduct public awareness campaign on necessity and means for protection of the Ozone Layer of the Earth and the government’s commitment to phase out ozone depleting substances.

Education, training, legislation, regulations and other incentives will ensure that the Cook Islands will continue to meet its obligations under the Montreal Protocol.

Read the attached pdf of the World Ozone Day 2010 Report below at the end of this article.

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