

## **EPA waiver lets state tackle smog from small engines**

### **Lawn mowers make up majority of target in pollution crackdown**

By Erica Werner, Associated Press

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WASHINGTON - The Environmental Protection Agency granted California long-awaited permission Monday to slash emissions from lawn mowers and other small-engine machines, a change it will seek nationally next year.

The EPA waiver will allow the nation's most populous state, starting Jan. 1, to require highly polluting small engines to be sold with catalytic converters that cut smog emissions by roughly 40 percent.

"The emission standards we are considering would reduce smog-forming pollutants from lawn mowers by over 40 percent when fully implemented," said Bill Wehrum, EPA acting assistant administrator for air and radiation. "EPA approved the California waiver request because new, cleaner engines can safely reduce emissions."

Engines under 50 horsepower account for 7 percent of smog emissions in California from mobile sources, the equivalent of about 3 million cars. The engines also power pressure washers and small generators, but the bulk are on lawn mowers.

The EPA action Monday ended several years of political dispute driven by Republican Sen. Kit Bond, whose state of Missouri is home to two factories owned by Briggs & Stratton, the nation's largest small-engine maker.

Briggs & Stratton had resisted installing catalytic converters on its engines, and Bond had sought to block California from instituting its regulation. The state has unique authority under the Clean Air Act to set tougher pollution standards than the federal government, once it gets an EPA waiver.

Bond backed off under pressure from Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., but he did succeed in blocking other states from being able to copy California's rule, something the Clean Air Act normally allows. Instead, he required EPA to write a national standard.

Bond had questioned whether mowers with catalytic converters could spark fires, but an EPA study earlier this year found there was no safety problem.

"This is a giant step forward for California," Feinstein said. "It paves the way for California to implement strict emission controls on lawn mowers and other small engines and to see major reductions in air pollution."

California, home to some of the nation's most polluted air in the Los Angeles basin and [San Joaquin Valley](#), is under constant pressure to meet federal air quality standards or risk sanctions including losing money for highway projects.

The California Air Resources Board, which passed the mower emissions rule three years ago but couldn't enforce it pending the EPA waiver, welcomed the news as key in developing clean air plans.

"We're really having to struggle to find enough reductions to achieve the air quality standards, so if you take away a piece that's this big, it would probably permanently handicap us," said Tom Cackette, the agency's deputy executive officer.

