# Freon Recovery

**What is Freon?** Freon is a generic name for various gasses used in refrigeration and cooling equipment and is a trademark of DuPont. Freon is not inherently toxic, but is a dangerous substance and must be handled with care to avoid risk of suffocation and other hazards. Freon is also harmful to the environment and is considered one of the most problematic greenhouse gases.

**How is Freon Regulated?** Because of its effects on global climate, several traditional Freon types were banned by the Clean Air Act in 1990. The CAA also established regulations (Section 608) which regulates the handling of Freon from discarded units. Section 608 sets standards for training and certification of Freon recovery technicians and other rules affecting the equipment and reclamation procedures used in recovering Freon.

**What are the Various Types of Freon?** Traditional, and now banned, types of Freon are made of CFC's and HCFC's: chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs). These two types of Freon are further classified by numeric coding; R-11, R-12 and R-22 are the most common types banned by the Clean Air Act. Several new non-CFC and non-HCFC Freon's have been developed to replace the banned types, the most common of which is R-134a. Most refrigeration units are labeled (currently required) with the type of Freon they contain so identifying the type in each unit is as simple as reading the label.

**Can I Recover Freon?** The short answer is yes, with training and the proper equipment, offering Freon recovery services is a relatively simple endeavor. The Clean Air Act, Section 608, requires anyone handling Freon to be certified through an appropriate testing service before handling any refrigerants. These rules also set standards for recovery equipment and require the provider of recovery services to register with the EPA. The actual recovery process is quite simple and only requires attention to detail, and not technical skill. An effective recovery unit retails for approximately $1,000 and can handle all types of Freon. The collected Freon must be shipped to a certified Freon reclamation facility. These reclaimers will typically charge a fee for certain types and pay the collector for others. In most cases, using two recovery cylinders, one for R-12 and one for all others, will allow you to recover value from the R-12 to offset the costs of reclamation of the mixed refrigerants. Confirm these issues with your vendor prior to start-up as you may be able to isolate certain types to ensure costs are kept to a minimum.

## Freon Recovery Information

**US EPA** – provides guidance and resources for recovery programs
www.epa.gov/ozone/snap/emissions/downloads/SafeDisposalBrochure.pdf

**United Refrigeration**
ABQ supplier of equipment and Freon reclamation
(505) 883-9500
www.uri.com

The Air-Conditioning and Refrigeration Institute
703-524-8800 www.ahrinet.org

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