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FACTSHEET

'Topping Up' of air conditioning/refrigeration systems is not allowed

'Topping up' means adding refrigerant to refrigeration and air conditioning systems before checking for, and fixing, any leaks. This is not allowed under the Australian Codes of Practice for handling both stationary and automotive refrigerant systems. Topping up refrigerant in any system is not allowed.

'Topping up' and the refrigerant handling Codes of Practice

The refrigerant Codes of Practice are best practice guidelines on handling refrigerant for ARC-licensed technicians. They have been developed under the Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas Management Regulations 1995. The codes are mandatory and help to reduce emissions of synthetic greenhouse gases and ozone depleting substances into the atmosphere. This is consistent with Australia's obligations as a signatory to the Montreal Protocol.

The following references are taken from the codes of practice on the 'topping up' of refrigeration and air conditioning systems:

The Australia and New Zealand Refrigerant Handling Code of Practice 2025 states:

'A system known to be leaking must not be topped up with refrigerant until all leaks are fixed. A technician cannot do other work on leaking equipment, without repairing the leak.'
(Part 1 – section 9.2; Part 2 – section 10.2)

Copies of the Codes of Practice can be downloaded from the ARC website www.arctick.org. For further information visit the ARC website or call the ARC on 1300 884 483.

Why 'topping' up is not allowed

'Topping up' is bad for the environment. If you haven't checked for, and repaired, any leaks the system will continue to release refrigerant to the atmosphere.

Controlled refrigerant is found in many household and car air conditioning systems. It may be an ozone depleting substance and/or synthetic greenhouse gas. If released into the atmosphere, it can contribute to global warming or in some cases damage the ozone layer. The ozone layer protects life on earth by absorbing ultra-violet (UV) radiation from the sun. UV radiation is linked to skin cancer, genetic damage and immune suppression in humans and other living organisms.

Discharging controlled refrigerant is illegal under the *Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas Management Act 1989*. High penalties may apply. Only ARC-licensed technicians can handle and trade controlled refrigerant in Australia.

Avoid mixing refrigerants

If you add refrigerant to an existing system charge before you identify the existing refrigerant, you also risk mixing refrigerants. This can weaken the performance of the system. There may also be a safety risk. To avoid mixing refrigerants:

- correctly label the refrigerant type in systems.
- make sure you identify the refrigerant in systems before fixing them.
- ensure your recovery cylinders are the right type for the refrigerant identified and are labelled correctly.

About the ARC

The Australian Refrigeration Council Ltd (ARC) administers refrigerant handling licences and refrigerant trading authorisations on behalf of the Australian Government. They provide licences and authorisations to professionals in the refrigeration/air conditioning industry. To enquire about applying for a licence visit www.arctick.org or call 1300 884 483.