

This fact sheet is funded by the National Environmental Protection Agency.

Information supplied by the
Australian Refrigeration Council Ltd



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FACTSHEET

Local councils and refrigerant recovery – green solutions

If air conditioners and refrigerators bound for landfill/recycling have not had their refrigerant gas recovered, there is a significant risk the refrigerant will be discharged into the atmosphere.

Did you know that only 30-40% of refrigerant is recovered from end-of-life domestic fridges and freezers? This, coupled with air conditioners, equates to over 200 tonnes of refrigerant illegally dumped and potentially discharged into the atmosphere each year. Fluorocarbon refrigerants damage the ozone layer and contribute to global warming.

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. Not only can discharging gases damage the ozone layer and contribute to global warming, it is also illegal. Penalties of up to \$132,000 for individuals and \$660,000 for corporations may apply.

Local councils are key to the management of air conditioners and refrigerators as they travel from kerbside and rubbish collection to landfill or recycling.

Refrigerant recovery

Recovery can be undertaken by anyone who holds a Restricted Refrigerant Recoverer Licence and Restricted Refrigerant Trading Authorisation, or an appropriately (ARC) licensed and authorised technician.

Recovered gas may be stored and returned to participating refrigerant wholesalers for a credit or rebate. Wholesalers can be found on the ARC website at www.arctick.org/business-authorisation/refrigerant-wholesalers.

How can councils help protect Australia from these emissions?

As a council, there are 2 pathways you can follow when it comes to the collection of air conditioners and refrigerators. Which pathway is best for you?

Pathway 1 – Kerbside collection by contractors

When engaging contractors to pick up air conditioners and refrigerators from kerbside locations, it's possible these systems are taken directly to metal recyclers **or** waste transfer stations where they are not degassed.

- **Solution** – Make refrigerant recovery a key criterion in the contractor tender process. Ensure contractors demonstrate they employ people with an appropriate ARC licence.

Scavengers are also known to scour local areas for illegal pick up of refrigeration and air conditioning systems, which can result in illegal, unlicensed degassing, among other things.

- **Solution** – Make pickups scheduled to prevent scavengers from illegally degassing.

Pathway 2 – Kerbside collection by local councils

Where local councils control the kerbside pickup of air conditioners and refrigerators, it's an ideal opportunity to control the risk of illegal discharging of refrigerant into the atmosphere.

- **Solution** – Conduct refrigerant recovery yourself by nominating employees to train and get a Restricted Refrigerant Recoverer Licence (RRRL) through the ARC. Recovery can then be done at local waste transfer stations – if run by the council – or a nominated collection area. You can return recovered gas to participating refrigerant wholesalers who can provide you with a rebate or credit.

For more information on refrigerant recovery and the RRRL, please visit www.arctick.org/RRRL or contact the ARC Customer Service team on 1300 884 483.



ARC5919/JVD/0726