CALIFORNIA AIR RESOURCES BOARD

FACT SHEET

Authorization of the Small Off-Road Engine Regulations

- Small off-road engine (SORE) regulations apply to spark-ignition engines 25 hp and below used in most lawn and garden equipment.
- No other state may adopt California's emission standards for SORE.
- By model year 2028, emission standards for smog-forming emissions from new engines are set at zero.
- SORE regulations do not affect equipment already sold and in use, and they do not ban gasoline-fueled engines and equipment.
- Manufacturers may use emission reduction credits to certify engines through 2032.

Why California's Waivers and Authorizations Matter

Six of the ten most polluted cities in the United States are located in California. Many regions within the state cannot meet federal ozone standards. Communities in these heavily affected areas face disproportionately high rates of asthma and cardiopulmonary illness, making regulatory updates critical for public health protection. Total smog-forming emissions from SORE already exceed emissions from light-duty passenger cars in California. By 2031, SORE emissions were projected to be nearly twice those from light-duty passenger cars without the 2021 amendments to the regulations.

Emission Reductions from the 2021 SORE Amendments

The 2021 updates to the SORE regulations are projected to significantly improve air quality, reducing emissions by nearly 60,000 tons of oxides of nitrogen and more than 400,000 tons of reactive organic gases by 2043. Californians may continue purchasing, selling, repairing, maintaining and using gasoline-fueled engines and equipment for their useful life. Users may purchase replacement engines for larger equipment if California-certified engines are not available.

Federal Authority for California Standards

The federal Clean Air Act allows California to set its own emissions standards for small off-road engines, subject to U.S. EPA authorization. Federal regulations prohibit other states from adopting California's standards for spark-ignition engines under 50 horsepower. Engines used in stationary equipment and/or those that use diesel fuel are not subject to the SORE regulations. Federal law prohibits the SORE regulations from applying to engines and vehicles primarily used for commercial farming or commercial construction.

Ongoing Engagement

CARB continues to track products offered for sale and regularly engages with manufacturers, retailers, and distributors to address questions, monitor market progress, and support compliance efforts.

Support for Consumers

CARB has hosted a dedicated landscaper workgroup since 2023 to closely monitor real-world experiences, provide targeted support, and ensure professional landscapers have accurate information about incentives programs to help purchase zero-emission equipment.