



Managing Emissions from Cannabis Production and Processing Operations in Metro Vancouver

Background

Federal, provincial and local governments, including Metro Vancouver and its member jurisdictions, have roles in the regulation of legal cannabis production and processing. Metro Vancouver has delegated authority for air pollution control and air quality management within the Metro Vancouver region, including industrial and agricultural land.

Emissions from cannabis production and processing include volatile organic compounds (VOC) that can contribute to the formation of harmful ground-level ozone and fine particulate matter if insufficiently controlled and can negatively impact human health and the environment.

Currently, commercial cannabis producers and processors must apply to Metro Vancouver for authorization of their controlled emissions through a site-specific permit. The development of a potential regulation, as an alternative, is being explored to provide a more streamlined process to obtain authorization for air emission discharges.

Why now?

The legalization of recreational cannabis in October 2018 resulted in the rapid expansion of licensed cannabis

production and processing facilities in the Metro Vancouver region. Since then, Metro Vancouver has received hundreds of complaints regarding odorous emissions from cannabis production and processing operations. Furthermore, hotter, drier summers associated with climate change are expected to exacerbate the potential for formation of harmful ground-level ozone, which requires sunlight and increases at higher temperatures. This was evidenced during the heat wave in June 2021 with peak ozone levels measured in the region that were the highest observed since the 1980s. The proposed requirements for cannabis production and processing are intended to mitigate potential health and environmental impacts of emissions from this sector.

Input on the potential regulation

The first phase of public input on initial proposals was conducted in 2019. Following this, additional, focused discussions were held with stakeholders from December 2020 to February 2021 to further explore the proposals and to identify potential solutions. Metro Vancouver has updated the initial proposals to address concerns and incorporate suggestions raised to date. The revised proposal is presented in an updated Discussion Paper, dated July 2021.

Proposal Changes from Phase 1 Engagement in 2019/2020

- There is **no upper limit on the size of facilities** that could be registered under the proposed regulation.
- **Additional control measures during air quality advisories** will not be required. Instead, specified emission control would be required at all times.
- **Outdoor cannabis cultivation and cultivation of industrial hemp** under the federal Industrial Hemp Regulations will not be covered under the proposed regulation.

Proposed Requirements

- Facilities would be required to have an **emission management plan**. Facilities with an indoor growing area greater than 200 m² would be required to have this plan prepared by a qualified professional.
- Emission control requirements would require facilities to enclose all VOC sources and use and maintain **activated carbon filters** for VOC control within enclosures. Facilities using other control technologies would continue to seek authorization through a site specific permit.
- A **complaint and officer observation response plan** would require facilities to receive complaints, notify Metro Vancouver, investigate potential causes, and take remedial measures to ensure compliance.

- A **minimum distance of 200 metres** would be required between new facilities and land that is zoned for residential use, hospitals, schools, daycares, playgrounds and community care facilities.
- **Registration fees and variable annual fees based on VOC emissions discharged** would encourage emission reductions and recover costs of application reviews and inspections.
- **Required records and annual reporting** related to cannabis production and emission controls will enable ongoing confirmation that the emissions are being controlled effectively.

Get more information and provide feedback

Background material, an online questionnaire, and information about other opportunities to provide feedback are available at www.metrovancouver.org (search for 'cannabis').

We encourage you to provide feedback by November 30, 2021.

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