

How Can We Help the Ozone Layer?

Much of the effort to restore the ozone layer has been handled through legislation to drastically reduce the production and use of ozone-depleting substances (ODS). In addition, there are many actions each of us can take to individually create a positive impact. A few sources of ODS include fire extinguishers, aerosols, cleaning solvents and products used for cooling.¹ While most new products will have eliminated compounds with high ozone-depleting ability, older products (especially from the mid-1990s or earlier) may utilize harmful ODS and are either still in use or in storage. Refrigerators, freezers and air conditioning units (both household and vehicular) all commonly utilized refrigerants classified as ODS in the past. Here are a few things to keep in mind if you are using a product that contains ODS:

- Only have a certified technician service your equipment. This is a good practice for both new and old equipment. However, an EPA Section 608 Certification is required to service some refrigerants, like R-22. Using a certified technician will help prevent accidental releases of ODS into the environment.
- Refrigerant loops are designed as closed systems, yet there remains the possibility they can leak. If you have an air conditioner unit or refrigerator that is low on coolant, then there is likely a small leak in the loop. Instead of having your technician “top off” the coolant, have them search for leaks. If not, the system will likely leak again!
- Retrofit your old refrigerant with a newer, safer alternative. The [EPA Significant New Alternatives Policy \(SNAP\) program](#) establishes substitutes for traditionally-used ODS. Replacing the old refrigerant helps remove it from use and eliminate releases to the environment.
- Sometimes the best option for dealing with these older pieces of equipment is to dispose of them. Replacing the unit with a new model will provide you with a safer alternative for the environment that also likely provides increases in energy efficiency. You may even be able to [receive a rebate](#) or a [tax credit](#) through the Energy Star Program! It is important to dispose of these old products by following established protocol. The harmful ODS must be removed before disposal, otherwise there is the risk of a release within the landfill. To make this process easier, the EPA has created the Responsible Appliance Disposal (RAD) program. You can [use their website](#) to search for an authorized disposal partner in your area!



By keeping these few items in mind, we can reduce the amounts of ODS that will be released in the future and safely remove them from circulation.