



# FACT SHEET

## Halon Factsheet

### What is halon?

Halons are firefighting agents that were introduced into Australia in the early 1970s. Halons are liquefied, compressed gases that stop the spread of fire by chemically disrupting combustion. They quickly replaced many previously accepted firefighting products because of their superior firefighting characteristics and ease of use.

Halons are fully halogenated chemicals that have relatively long lifetimes in the atmosphere. They are broken down in the stratosphere releasing reactive bromine that is extremely damaging to ozone. Reactions involving bromine are estimated to be responsible for 25 per cent of the chemical destruction of ozone over Antarctica and 50 per cent over the Arctic. The ozone depleting potential of halons is 10 times greater than that of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). As such, halons are aggressive ozone depleting substances (ODS). One kilogram of halon 1211 can destroy 50 tonnes of ozone.

The two types of halon commonly found in Australia are:

- Halon 1211\* also known as BCF and used as a streaming agent, and;
- Halon 1301\* also known as BTM and used as a total flooding agent.

### What does halon fire extinguishing equipment look like?

Fire extinguishers containing halon are colour coded YELLOW unless they are imported directly from overseas. In which case they can be green or red with a green band. Imported units are commonly found in aircraft and foreign shipping.



\*Halon numbers are designed for convenient and quick reference. The first digit of the number represents the number of carbon atoms in the compound molecule; the second digit, the number of fluorine atoms; the third digit, the number of chlorine atoms; the fourth digit, the number of bromine atoms; the fifth digit; the number of iodine atoms



### Is halon still used in Australia?

Australia stopped importing halons at the end of 1992. New halon is no longer available in Australia. Under State and Territory legislation, the possession and use of halon was banned in most jurisdictions from December 1995, except for approved essential uses (see below). Changes made in 2003 to the *Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas Management Act 1989* and its supporting regulations mean that this ban now exists under national legislation and applies in all jurisdictions.

The approved essential uses of halon are for situations where fire risk poses a danger to human life and there are no acceptable alternatives to halon. In practice, this means that halon is still used in certain situations in:

- Commercial and private aviation;
- Ocean going shipping, including foreign flagged vessels operating in or through Australian waters; and
- Defence applications.

Any person or company possessing halon, which is for use in fire protection equipment, must hold a Halon Special Permit. To apply for a Halon Special Permit, please view [www.fpa.com.au/ozone/licensing/halon-special-permit](http://www.fpa.com.au/ozone/licensing/halon-special-permit)

### National Halon Bank

Australia stopped importing halons at the end of 1992. Australia has made significant advances in the responsible management and phase out of halon.

In 1993, the Australian Government established the National Halon Bank to store decommissioned halon for destruction or reclamation to meet essential uses until alternatives are found for all current uses.

All halon supplied from the National Halon Bank has been recovered from commercial uses and reclaimed to meet the international standard - ISO 7201-1 1989.

### How do I dispose of halon?

The National Halon Bank operates a free call service to advise you on disposal of halon. Call 1800 658 084 to arrange for the disposal of any unwanted halon product.

Halon may also be disposed of at fire stations and by the fire protection company that services your fire systems. The Government provides a free service for the general public and small business to dispose of halon.

Information on halon disposal is available at [www.environment.gov.au/protection/ozone/halon/halon-disposal](http://www.environment.gov.au/protection/ozone/halon/halon-disposal). The criteria to qualify for free disposal are listed in the Halon Collection Point Deposit Form which is accessible from the same website.

