
 HFC PHASE-DOWN GUIDE

2026 HFC Phase-Down Survival Guide

A plain-language breakdown of the AIM Act, which refrigerants are under the most pressure, and a five-step plan to protect your supply and your margins.

By Chris Mussey, Owner & EPA-Certified Reclaimer • American Refrigerants, Inc. • Updated July 2026

Top 200

AIM ACT HFC ALLOWANCE
HOLDERS NATIONWIDE

EPA

CERTIFIED
RECLAIMER

AHRI 700

RECLAMATION
PURITY STANDARD

The Information Gap Is Costing Contractors Money

Every year the AIM Act's phase-down schedule tightens, and every year we field the same calls from contractors who found out about a supply problem the hard way: mid-job, mid-quote, or mid-season. The mandates are public record. What is missing is a plain-language explanation of what they mean for a working HVAC contractor buying and recovering refrigerant day to day.

This guide is that explanation. It is free to use, free to share, and free to point your own customers toward. No sign-up required.

— THE REGULATION

What the AIM Act Actually Does

The American Innovation and Manufacturing (AIM) Act, signed into law in December 2020, phases **down** HFC production and consumption, not out entirely. The EPA sets a declining allowance baseline measured against a 2022 reference year, and every producer and importer of virgin HFCs has to operate inside that shrinking allowance. Reclaimed refrigerant is not subject to the same allowance caps, which is why reclamation capacity is becoming a bigger part of the supply conversation every year.

PERIOD	ALLOWABLE VS. 2022 BASELINE	WHAT IT MEANS FOR CONTRACTORS
2022–2023	90% (10% cut)	Minor tightening. Supply still felt normal.
2024–2028	60% (40% cut)	The cut most contractors are living through right now. Virgin HFC pricing gets more volatile.
2029–2033	30% (70% cut)	Reclaimed and recovered refrigerant stop being a nice-to-have and become the primary supply strategy for legacy HFC equipment.
2034–2035	20% (80% cut)	Virgin HFC allowances are scarce. Reclaimer relationships are the difference between a completed job and a stalled one.
2036 and beyond	15% (85% cut)	Reclaimed supply is essential, not supplemental.

Source: EPA AIM Act allowance schedule, baseline year 2022.

The Refrigerants Contractors Ask About Most

R-22

No longer produced domestically. Every pound in circulation today is reclaimed or previously imported stock. Buyback and reclamation are the only supply channel left.

R-410A

The refrigerant behind roughly 90% of residential split systems in the U.S. As HFC allowances tighten, R-410A is one of the volumes most exposed to price swings.

R-454B

The A2L replacement for R-410A in new equipment (Chemours Opteon XL41). Expect a mixed-fleet transition period, not an overnight switch.

— THE PLAN

Five-Step Survival Strategy

1

Audit what you actually have.

Know your current refrigerant inventory and usage by type before a shortage forces the conversation. Most contractors underestimate how much recovered product is sitting in cylinders on the truck or in the shop.

2

Cut out the markup layer.

Every hand a cylinder passes through before it reaches you adds cost. Buying reclaimed refrigerant directly from an EPA-certified reclaimer, instead of a distributor reselling reclaimed product, removes a markup layer entirely.

3

Turn recovered refrigerant into revenue instead of a liability.

Recovered gas from a job site has resale value through a buyback program. Selling it, instead of holding or disposing of it, offsets the rising cost of virgin product.

4

Build a real transition plan for R-454B.

New installs are increasingly A2L. Make sure your team, your tools, and your safety procedures are ready for mildly flammable refrigerant handling before it is the majority of your install volume, not after.

5

Partner with a reclaimer, not just a distributor.

A distributor sells you what is on the shelf. A reclaimer can also buy your recovered product, process mixed and contaminated gas in-house, and give you a direct read on what supply actually looks like month to month.

Frequently Asked Questions

Will refrigerant prices keep rising?

Prices track allowance tightening, so volatility is more likely than a one-time jump. Virgin HFCs facing the steepest allowance cuts are the most exposed. This is a primary reason reclaimed and recovered supply is gaining importance.

Is R-410A going away?

Not immediately. R-410A remains legal to service existing equipment; new equipment is shifting toward R-454B and other lower-GWP options. Expect a multi-year mixed-fleet period, not a hard cutoff.

How is reclaimed refrigerant quality verified?

Reputable reclaimers process refrigerant to AHRI 700 purity standards using independent laboratory testing and on-site gas chromatography, so contractors can verify what they're buying meets specification before it goes back into a customer's system.

Can mixed or contaminated refrigerant be sold?

It depends on the buyer. Many buyers turn away mixed-gas cylinders because they lack in-house separation capability. Reclaimers with their own mixed-gas fractionation can evaluate and buy blends that would otherwise be rejected.

How fast does buyback payment happen?

Recovered refrigerant is typically paid within 30 days or less. Virgin refrigerant in sealed, factory-condition containers that can be resold as-is can move faster; ask your buyer directly about your specific inventory.

Does this apply outside Florida?

The AIM Act is federal, so the allowance schedule and its effects apply nationwide. Reclaimers that ship product and accept buyback shipments across the country, not just locally, are worth having in your supply chain regardless of where you're based.

About American Refrigerants, Inc.

American Refrigerants is an EPA-certified refrigerant reclaimer based in Bradenton, Florida, and an HFC Allowance Holder under the AIM Act, one of fewer than 200 facilities nationwide with that designation. We call ourselves the "smallest big boy" in the industry: big enough to buy, reclaim, and ship at volume, small enough that a contractor still gets a person on the phone instead of a procurement queue.

EPA-CERTIFIED RECLAIMER

Reclaiming to AHRI 700 purity standards, verified by independent laboratory testing and on-site gas chromatography.

TOP 200 NATIONWIDE

HFC Allowance Holder under the AIM Act. One of fewer than 200 facilities nationally with that designation.

IN-HOUSE MIXED-GAS SEPARATION

Most buyers outsource mixed-gas fractionation. We do it in-house, so mixed and contaminated cylinders get evaluated and purchased.

NATIONWIDE BUYBACK & SHIPPING

Not just Southwest Florida. We ship refrigerant product and accept buyback shipments from contractors across the country.

We compete directly against corporate procurement departments on speed, flexibility, and personal service, and we win that match-up every time. That is the whole reason this guide exists: contractors deserve a straight answer about where refrigerant supply is headed, from the people actually doing the reclaiming.

Ready to Protect Your Supply?

Whether you're buying reclaimed refrigerant or selling recovered product, tell us what you have and we'll tell you what it's worth.

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