

Print Edition

COOL AIR ON THE HOT SEAT

ZOE CORMIER

December 15, 2007

THE NEWS The Environmental Investigation Agency, a London-based group that exposes environmental crime, was in Bali pushing for a global ban on hydrofluorocarbons. HFCs are refrigerants used in cars, air conditioners and supermarket chillers - and were once seen as a good alternative to chemicals banned in the 1980s for gouging a hole in the ozone layer. In fact, HFCs are potent greenhouse gases, thousands of times more powerful at trapping the sun's heat than carbon dioxide. **THE BUZZ** There are already alternatives to HFCs that work, such as ammonia, but industry is reluctant to make the switch. "Without a big push by the international community to encourage safe alternatives, HFCs will continue to be produced," says Clare Perry, a senior campaigner for the EIA. More than 280,000 metric tons of HFCs were produced in 2005 and their use is projected to increase dramatically.

THE BOTTOM LINE A number of corporations, such as Coca-Cola and Unilever, as well as the German car industry have already volunteered to phase out HFCs. "If the German car manufacturers can do it, why isn't this happening in other countries?" Ms. Perry asks.

Zoe Cormier is a science writer based in London. Her column appears every other week in Focus.

zcormier@globeandmail.com

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