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Firm Fined \$18,780 for Illegal R410A Equipment Import

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A company faces a \$18,780 penalty for importing equipment containing R410A refrigerant without a required licence, violating the Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas Management Act 1989, highlighting the economic and environmental costs of non-compliance.

A company has been hit with a \$18,780 fine for breaching the Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas Management Act 1989, as reported by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) on July 31, 2025. The

infringement stemmed from the unlicensed import of equipment containing R410A, a hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) refrigerant used in air conditioning and cooling systems. This synthetic greenhouse gas, known for its long atmospheric lifespan, contributes to climate change if released, making its regulation critical under Australian law. The company's failure to secure an Equipment Licence (EQPL) before importing triggered the penalty, underscoring the financial risks of ignoring compliance requirements.

The incident reflects the broader economic implications of regulatory oversight in Australia's \$1.2 billion refrigeration and air conditioning sector. The Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas Management Act 1989 mandates licences for importing equipment with HFCs like R410A to curb environmental damage and ensure market fairness. Without a licence, businesses face fines up to \$187,800 for serious breaches, per the Act. The DCCEEW, working with the Australian Border Force, enforces these rules to prevent unlicensed imports, which can distort competition and burden compliant firms with higher costs. Monica Collins, Head of DCCEEW's Office of Compliance, emphasized the need for diligence: "Importers must verify requirements for synthetic greenhouse gases before bringing equipment into Australia," as noted in a 2019 HVAC&R News report.

This case highlights the cost of non-compliance for businesses navigating Australia's trade regulations. The low-volume exemption allows imports of up to 25 kilograms of HFCs annually without a licence, but exceeding this threshold without an EQPL incurs steep penalties. The \$3,000 non-refundable licence application fee and potential 60-day processing time add further economic pressure, per DCCEEW guidelines. For small businesses, such oversights can erode profit margins and disrupt operations. The penalty serves as a warning: compliance with environmental regulations is not just about avoiding fines but maintaining a level playing field in a competitive market.