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Wednesday, August 27, 2003

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EDITORIAL:

Environmental agency failed with poor 'clean air' decision

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There's an interesting report out by the General Accounting Office that has uncovered what can happen when one of our regulatory agencies doesn't do its homework.

The GAO found that the Environmental Protection Agency altered the Clean Air Act's "new source review" rules in December based on faulty data.

The program is intended to reduce pollution emissions from power plants, oil refineries and other industrial facilities. EPA officials, though, decided to relax the rules because they claimed that they discouraged energy-efficiency improvements.

How do they know? Because the industrial facilities told them so.

The agency apparently relied only on anecdotal data from the industries that were affected by the rule, the GAO report said.

That's a comforting thought. It's unfortunate that the government agency responsible for protecting the nation's environment is basing its decisions on something other than scientific data.

The EPA is expected to announce more new source review rule changes this week that will allow industries to do more upgrades without having to install better emissions-reducing technology. In other words, allow them to pollute more.

The state of Maine is expected to join in a lawsuit with other states to block the latest rule changes, and it should. It's apparent the EPA isn't basing its decisions on sound science, and therefore isn't doing

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