Environmental groups challenge new aircraft emission standards

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Environmental advocacy groups have petitioned the federal appeals court in Washington to review new aircraft emission standards, which were finalized by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in late December.

The standards are the first ever established for aircraft greenhouse gas emissions by the federal government.

In a press release issued to coincide with the Jan. 15 court filing, the Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth, Earthjustice and the Center for Biological Diversity said the emission rule lags behind existing aircraft engine technology by more than 10 years and therefore will have no substantive impact.

"The rule challenged today won't apply to in-service airplanes and won't apply to new in-production airplanes until 2028," the organizations said. "At that point the EPA expects all airplanes to already comply with the standards or be phased out. As a result, the agency doesn't project any emissions reductions from the rule."

The groups called upon the incoming Biden administration to set standards using existing aircraft technology.

The standards apply to commercial aircraft and large business jets. They align U.S. aircraft emission rules with standards set in 2016 by the International Civil Aviation Organization, which is the aviation arm of the United Nations.

In a statement issued upon finalization of the standards on Dec. 28, the EPA noted that typically 75% of U.S.-manufactured aircraft are sold overseas.

"These standards will help ensure consistent standards across the world, and most importantly allow U.S. manufactured planes, such as commercial and large passenger jets, to continue to compete in the global marketplace," the agency said.