



South Coast Air Quality Management District

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NEWS

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SCAQMD Adopts Comprehensive Clean Air Blueprint for Southland

The South Coast Air Quality Management District today adopted a 21st century blueprint for clean air, calling for stringent regulations combined with incentives to provide healthful air for the region's 17 million residents.

The plan was developed over the past three years with extensive public input, including more than 200 meetings with community and environmental groups, churches, local governments and business groups across SCAQMD's four-county region.

"This air quality plan is a sensible, comprehensive, regulatory approach that will improve the health and lives of all residents across our region," said Wayne Nastri, SCAQMD's executive officer. "Our extensive public participation process was critical to the development of the most comprehensive plan to date."

In consideration of extensive public testimony received last month, SCAQMD's Governing Board voted today to further strengthen the plan by:

- Accelerating emission reductions from the largest sources including oil refineries, achieving a five ton-per-day reduction of nitrogen oxides (NOx) as soon as feasible and no later than 2025;
- Transitioning an emissions cap-and-trade program known as RECLAIM as soon as practicable to traditional regulations, and report back in 60 days on a target date for the transition;
- Undertaking a stakeholder process and draft for consideration by Feb. 1, 2019, a rule to reduce emissions from non-aircraft sources at commercial airports;
- Seeking new authority from the state Legislature to require the accelerated purchase of near-zero and zero-emission heavy-duty vehicles for public agency fleets; and
- Prioritizing incentive funding for heavy-duty vehicles to the most cost-effective technologies available in the short-term such as near-zero-emission natural gas engines.

Air quality has improved dramatically over the years and emissions have dropped significantly. This 2016 Air Quality Management Plan addresses the significant challenge of further reducing smog-forming NO_x – above and beyond existing regulations -- by 45 percent in 2023 to meet a health-based standards for ground-level ozone. The plan also shows how the region can accomplish an additional 10 percent reduction to meet a more stringent ozone standard by 2031.

“Today’s cars emit just a fraction of those driven a generation ago, and businesses in our region have reduced their emissions more than 90 percent.

“The easy pollution solutions were put in place decades ago. That’s why moving forward we need stringent regulations as well as financial incentives to transform our cars, our homes, our businesses and our goods movement industry to zero- or near-zero emissions in just a few short years,” Nastri said.

The plan calls for specific regulations further reducing stationary emissions, including:

- A 35 percent further reduction in emissions from the region’s highest-emitting sources, including oil refineries, on top of the 45 percent reduction approved by SCAQMD’s Board in December 2015;
- For diesel backup generators and residential and commercial appliances, requirements to use zero-emission technologies wherever feasible and cost-effective, and near-zero technologies everywhere else; and
- Reductions in NO_x emissions from non-refinery flares, such as those at landfills and oil and gas extraction.

The plan must now be approved by the California Air Resources Board for inclusion in its State Implementation Plan, which in turn is submitted to the U.S. EPA for approval.

“This plan will protect public health by preventing an estimated 1,600 annual premature deaths from air pollution,” said Nastri. “And unlike any previous clean air plan, this one shows the full extent of the measures needed, and their cost, in order to achieve federal clean air standards.”

In other action today, the Board directed staff to begin an extensive public process and work with federal and state representatives over the next year to identify funding opportunities to help accelerate the turnover of existing vehicles and equipment to zero- and near-zero emission technologies.

Once identified, specific funding proposals will be brought to the Board for consideration. The plan places a priority on ensuring that incentive funding for the cleanest technologies is used first to benefit disadvantaged communities, consistent with SCAQMD’s environmental justice initiatives in place since 1997.

SCAQMD is the air pollution control agency for Orange County and major portions of Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

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