

Chowchilla plant makes green insulation

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In a move to incorporate more eco-friendly materials into homes, a fiberglass insulation manufacturing facility in Chowchilla began production on Sustainable Insulation that utilizes recycled and organic materials.

The facility, operated by CertainTeed, Pennsylvania-based manufacturer of building products, will make use of materials such as sand, recycled glass and a plant-based binder to form an insulation that contains no phenol, formaldehyde, harsh acrylics or dye associated with other insulating products.

In addition to being GREENGUARD Children & Schools certified, the Sustainable Insulation will exceed the California Air Resource Board (CARB) indoor air quality regulations.

Sustainable Insulation will initially launch in California and will be incorporated into CertainTeed's building insulation batts and rolls for both residential and commercial/institutional applications.

Besides the environmental benefits of the insulation itself, the Chowchilla plant also uses a closed-loop water system helps maximize water usage at the plant while a compression packaging technique will make it possible to move more product in fewer loads.

"Sustainable Insulation provides an ideal option for the industry to build more responsibly," said Paul Valle, president of CertainTeed Insulation. "And for the homeowner, it brings enhanced thermal and acoustic comfort, indoor air quality meeting the toughest California regulations and a product that lasts the life of the home with no maintenance needed."

Clean air plan targets industries from dairies to developers

By Denis Cuff

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Bay Area oil refineries could be required to cut fumes from tanks and pipes. Dairy farmers might have to provide feed that lessens the gas expelled by cows.

Homebuilders could be required to design housing tracts to minimize residents' car travel.

Even winemakers might have to operate under a rule to limit the sweet-smelling vapors that escape from fermentation tanks.

These are among the 57 possible measures in the blueprint for clean air in the Bay Area released by the region's pollution district in preparation for public workshops this week. The agency's 22-member air board is expected to vote on a plan in the fall.

The 520-page plan is a guide for the nine-county region trying to meet public health standards for smog and soot, as well as to reduce toxic air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, say planners and administrators at the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.

"We have made progress in cleaning the air, but we have more to do," said Jack Broadbent, chief executive of the agency that regulates stationary pollution sources. "We are having to look at smaller and smaller sources to continue our progress."

The nine-county region currently fails to meet state and federal public health standards for smog, an eye and throat irritant and trigger for asthma attacks, and for soot and fine particles, which can cause the same symptoms as smog and also increase risks of strokes and heart attacks, especially among the sick and elderly.

State law requires the smog-cleanup plans every three years in districts that flunk smog standards.

The district is going beyond that requirement to prepare the first integrated plan of its kind in California to control smog, fine particles, greenhouse gases and toxic air contaminants — rather than adopt a plan for one pollutant at a time.

"We think this is the most effective way to protect the public," Broadbent said.

The plan calls for new or tightened controls on oil refineries, digital printers, cement kilns, glass furnaces, large heaters in apartment and condominiums and natural gas drilling operations.

Specific rules to achieve the reductions would be prepared after the blueprint is adopted.

The district also would study another 17 potential measures, including limiting emissions from large winery fermentation tanks through equipment or operating restrictions.

The [San Joaquin Valley](#) already has such a rule in its air pollution district.

Bay Area wineries — including those in Napa, Sonoma and Livermore valleys — emit about three-quarters of a ton per day of ethanol and other gases that can form smog. Regulators had not determined the cost to winemakers.

"We lack information about the cost effectiveness of controlling winery emissions," said Dan Belik, a BAAQMD rule planner. "Our plan calls for investigating this."

The district would look at tightening several existing rules to limit pollution from oil refinery tanks, valves and pipes.

Regulating cows would be new territory. Following the lead of the [San Joaquin Valley air district](#), the Bay Area agency would consider whether to adopt a rule to reduce emissions in bovine waste.

"Our dairies in the Bay Area are smaller," Belik said. "We want to see if there is something we can learn from those other areas to apply here."

The Bay Area's estimated 80,000 dairy cows emit some 13.8 tons per day of organic gases.

To reduce the pollution on the hoof, the air district would look into requiring dairy farmers to cover waste piles promptly, flush cow stalls frequently and give animals feed that promotes thorough digestion and reduced belching of methane, a potent global warming gas.

Dairy farmers elsewhere have reduced methane by feeding their cows a diet heavy in Omega 3 fatty acids.

Making changes to get low-emission cows could cost Bay Area farmers roughly \$15 per animal annually, the district estimates.

To limit soot particles, the air district would consider expanding its regulation of restaurants to limit pollution from woks and wood-fired pizza ovens.

In 2007, the district limited emissions from beef charbroilers by requiring pollution control devices.

The air district already bars wood fires in homes on bad air nights. Under the clean air plan, the district would look into the costs and benefits of requiring that homes — when sold — be modified to convert open hearth fireplaces into low-emission fireplace inserts or stoves.

In the land-use arena, district administrators call for a rule aimed at planning and designing housing developments to minimize vehicle and energy use by those who will live there.

The district would consider creating pollution fees that builders would pay if their projects failed to meet certain thresholds for expected pollution from people who would live in the homes.