

Tractor replacement application deadline extended

By Carol Reiter

Merced Sun-Star, Wednesday (PM), January 5, 2011

A grant program to help replace agricultural tractors has expanded the application period and eligibility.

Applications are still being accepted, and more applicants are eligible for a new air district incentive program that replaces off-road agricultural tractors.

The program application period runs through Jan. 31. Funding for the program comes from a combination of local, state and federal sources.

Equipment must be self-propelled; tractors must operate at least 75 percent of the time in California and 50 percent of the time in the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District; and eligible equipment must not be receiving or under contract to receive funding from any local, state or federal programs.

Projects are funded on a dollar-per-horsepower basis. Contracts must be established before purchases are made. Money will be distributed in spring to early summer.

For more information, call (559) 230-5800.

Kettleman City report finalized

Vida en el Valle Wed., Jan. 5, 2011

SACRAMENTO -- The California Environmental Protection Agency and California Department of Public Health released last Friday the final report on their investigation of environmental and health conditions in Kettleman City.

The state investigation did not find a conclusive link to at least 11 birth defects reported in the small, majority Latino community of Kettleman City, but it did make recommendations to improve the overall health of the community.

"This report documents one of the most thorough environmental health investigations ever conducted in California," said Cal/EPA secretary Linda Adams. "Although we did not identify a conclusive cause for the recent birth defects in Kettleman City, we plan to follow up with additional actions that we hope will benefit families in the community."

The state's recommendations include:

The state will continue to work with the community services district to reduce the elevated level of arsenic in the community's water, and has offered funding to help pursue a new source of drinking water for Kettleman City;

The Department of Pesticide Regulation will conduct statewide risk assessments for diazinon and chlorpyrifos to determine if mitigation measures are necessary;

The California Air Resources Board will work with the San Joaquín Air Pollution Control District to evaluate benzene emissions from the air stripping units at the municipal water wells;

Officials will conduct further investigation and possible cleanup of chlordane contamination at one home;

The state will provide the community with an update on implementation of these recommendations by July 1.

[Fresno Bee Earth Blog, Wed., Jan. 5, 2011:](#)

Maybe you remember breathing that polluted air in 2001

By Mark Grossi

Ten years ago this month, Fresno suffered through a lung-busting bout of fog and smoke that raised pollution several times higher than the health standard.

It's quite a contrast with the winter air today in Fresno, which has shown some improvement because of fireplace wood-burning restrictions.

That's the conclusion from Evan Shipp, an air quality consultant and expert in analyzing the atmosphere. Shipp, who worked years for the local air district before striking off on his own, called Tuesday to remind me of that dark January.

Checking the records, he was so right.

California Air Resources Board data show a maximum reading of 188 micrograms per cubic meter of air at Fresno's First Street monitor. That number is off the charts.

The federal standard was 65 at the time. It was far too lenient to protect the public, federal officials would say a few years later.

Yet Fresno had a reading nearly three times higher than that weak standard. I wonder how many folks suffered unexplained lung problems that month.

The National Weather Service summary for January 2001 shows the nasty combination of smoke and fog continued for the first 10 days of the month.

By 2003, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District passed a rule to curb wood burning on the worst winter days.

In 2006, the federal government strengthened the standard for fine particulates, called PM-2.5. Officials lowered the threshold from 65 to 35 micrograms per cubic meter. Many scientists argue it is still not strong enough.

Last January, monitors showed many violations of the new standard for the first week of the month, but no readings climbed higher than 50 in Fresno.

"There has been improvement," Shipp said. "I don't think there's any doubt that the fireplace restrictions made the difference."