

Ozone limits in Valley may be tough to achieve **Supervisors told new U.S. goals will be costlier**

By David Castellon

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Wednesday, May 11, 2011

Despite the Valley's air being about 80 percent cleaner than it was two decades ago, an expected change in federally mandated ozone standards here could be impossible to meet by the 2024 deadline.

And surpassing that maximum ozone — or smog — level by even one day a year could cost the Valley hundreds of millions of dollars in federal highway funds. It could also result in additional fees and requirements that could make it too costly to start or expand certain types of businesses here, including gas stations, manufacturers, dry cleaners, dairies and farms, Seyed Sadredin told the Tulare County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday.

Sadredin, executive director of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, was there to present the board with the district's 2010 annual report.

But much of his discussion focused on the new Environmental Protection Agency mandate on ozone levels expected to be issued in late July.

The prior mandate, issued for the eight Valley counties in 1997, gave a goal for air having no more than 84 parts per billion of ozone gases over any eight-hour period. EPA's deadline was to have zero days without exceeding that measurement by 2024 or federal sanctions would be imposed.

That level was exceeded 49 days last year throughout the Valley counties, with Tulare and Kern counties having the most occurrences, 36 days each.

The EPA is considering lowering the allowable ozone rate to 60 or 70 ppb.

Tulare County air had 102 days last year with ozone measuring 70 ppb or more and 130 days when it exceeded 60 ppb, according to air district figures.

The Valley has some of the worst air in the country, in part because the mountains here tend to hold in bad air.

Hot sunny days here, particularly during the summer, add to the problem because they combine with nitrogen oxide and volatile organic chemicals — some caused by man-made pollutants, including car exhaust and manufacturing, as well as from natural sources that include manure and methane produced by cows — to create ozone.

And even if all cars and manufacturing were somehow eliminated from the Valley, naturally occurring ozone here might still exceed the maximum levels that the EPA is considering, Sadredin said.

So reaching that goal may be totally impossible — at least by the 2024 deadline, he said.

If the Valley were to exceed the standard, the EPA-ordered sanctions would kick in automatically and could include the federal government taking over air-pollution-control programs here.

And there would be no way to defer those sanctions, Sadredin told the supervisors.

"If you think things are tough, you haven't seen anything yet," he said of the anticipated EPA air requirements.

"We would have to improve [the air] another 80 percent" from its current level, said Supervisor Steve Worthley, who also is chairman of the air district board.

Businesses already have launched strict, costly changes to reduce pollutants, Sadredin said. "There's a few more ounces we can squeeze out of them," he said, but not nearly enough to make much of a difference.

And trying to impose such drastic additional cuts on business emissions would destroy the local economy, Worthley said.

"You cannot set a standard that's impossible to reach," he said.

Sadredin told the supervisors that the air district is lobbying federal officials and lawmakers to adapt the rules to better take into account the geographic and weather conditions that affect ozone levels here, as well as uncontrollable factors, including smoke from forest and brush fires that tend to settle over the Valley.

Sadredin said the air district also is lobbying for more time to try to meet the EPA's mandate

Cleaner vehicles could save California \$6b

By Mark Grossi, staff writer

The Fresno Bee, Tuesday, May 10, 2011

Californians would avoid more than \$6 billion in health and fuel costs if the state requires more hybrid, electric and other advanced vehicles by 2017, the American Lung Association says.

The group's latest study, released today, also says more than 400 lives could be saved annually if the California Air Resources Board tightens vehicle rules later this year.

"We've done all the easy things to clean up vehicles," said Jane Warner, president and chief executive officer of the association. "Now, we need to transform the vehicle fleet in California."

Cars and trucks create nearly half the bad-air emissions in California, which has the worst ozone and particle pollution in the country.

The study did not provide a breakdown of how health would be improved in each area of the state. The San Joaquin Valley's air pollution -- some of the worst in the country -- kills about 800 residents prematurely each year, according to a study by California State University, Fullerton.

Two weeks ago, the Lung Association ranked Valley cities among the worst in the nation for ozone and particle pollution. The cities include Fresno, Bakersfield, Visalia, Hanford and Merced.

In September, state officials are expected to propose requirements that would increase the number of battery electric, plug-in and fuel-cell vehicles.

Such technologies, along with cleaner gasoline-powered vehicles, would dramatically cut down on fuel use. Today's vehicle fleet averages 27 miles per gallon. With the most stringent new rules, the average could rise to 74 miles per gallon by 2025, saving motorists up to \$2.6 billion in fuel costs.

The Lung Association study, performed by a national engineering firm called TIAX, did not factor in manufacturing and other possible costs for vehicle improvements.

Lung Association officials said the avoided health costs alone would be worth nearly \$4 billion each year, including the elimination of more than 8,000 asthma attacks and more than 28,000 work days lost to illness.

Dr. David T. Cook, a Lung Association board member and assistant professor of thoracic surgery at the University of California at Davis Medical Center, said he often sees damaged lungs in surgery. He said there would be less human suffering with tighter regulation.

"Cleaner vehicles will improve the quality of life for our most vulnerable communities, including our kids, our seniors, low-income communities and others living with chronic lung illnesses," he said.

Lung Association backs tough rules on vehicle pollution

By Robert J. Hawkins

San Diego Union-Tribune, Wed., May 11, 2011

Half the air pollution in California comes from its 25 million vehicles and 90 percent of us live in areas with unhealthy air, according to the American Lung Association in California which is urging the state to adopt tough new pollution standards for vehicles by the year 2025.

The state's Air Resources Board is currently drafting new motor vehicle standards and the Lung Association is mounting an argument for the strictest standards possible.

In its new report, "The Road to Clean Air," the Lung Association asserts that the switch "next generation" vehicles across the state would have a transformational effect on the health of citizens and on the costs related to hospitalization, lost work and school days and premature deaths.

The Lung Association envisions a state in which conventional cars are mostly weeded out between 2017 and 2025 and replaced with vehicles powered by powerful batteries, electric plug-ins or fuel cells.

California has been at the forefront on clean vehicle standards, acknowledged Bonnie Holmes-Gen, senior policy director for the Lung Association, during a Tuesday press conference. The state must be "poised for the next step," she added.

The Air Resources Board is expected to release draft regulations for the next generation of motor vehicles in September with possible adoption in November. The guidelines will consolidate several clean air initiatives that have developed over the years, including greenhouse gas emissions, tailpipe exhaust standards and ozone emission requirements.

Essentially the Lung Association is calling for the phasing out of the petroleum-fueled combustion engine by the year 2025.

They are proposing pollution standards that cut "smog-forming" emissions by 75 percent; a minimum 6 to 7.8 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions annually between 2017 and 2025; and a requirement that 20 percent of all new vehicles are zero-emission.

The payoff for such high standards is substantial, according to the Lung Association report.

Vehicle greenhouse gas emissions would be cut by 45-52 percent; smog emissions would drop up to 85 percent; and petroleum consumption would drop nearly 50 percent.

Health benefits include a 65-75 percent drop in premature deaths; 8,444 fewer asthma attacks annually; 190,000 fewer respiratory symptoms avoided; more than 5,000 fewer cases of bronchitis; and as much as \$8.1 billion in health and societal related costs avoided.

The Lung Association points out that despite California's stringent vehicle pollution standards and its 300,000 low-emission hybrid vehicles on the roads today, eight of the Top 10 most polluted cities in the country have California zip codes, including San Diego (No. 7).

"As Californians, this is our moment," said Holmes-Gen, adding that she believes the auto industry is up to the challenge of meeting the more stringent standards. "Eighty percent of the technology (in proposed standards) is off the shelf today," she said.

Study predicts savings with new emission standards

By Associated Press

In the Modesto Bee, Merced Sun-Star and other papers, Wed., May 11, 2011

LOS ANGELES -- An American Lung Association study predicts California could save billions of dollars and hundreds of lives per year if the state adopts more stringent vehicle emission standards.

The report says by adopting new smog and particle pollution controls, greenhouse gas emission standards and a zero emission vehicle requirement, the state could prevent 420 premature deaths and save as much as \$8.1 billion in healthcare and other costs annually. Lung Association officials believe the benefits are greater than the cost of the regulation.

The California Air Resources Board is expected to release a draft of the new standards this fall, which are part of a larger plan to cut greenhouse gas emission and other air pollution from new cars that will be sold between 2017 and 2025.