

Q & A with Seyed Sadredin, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District

Bakersfield Californian, Fri., March 2, 2012

As of 2010, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has required large employers in the region to encourage carpooling, biking and other methods of commuting that reduce vehicle emissions. The first of several deadlines related to that mandate was Jan. 1, so we checked in with the district to see how those efforts were going.

Name: Seyed Sadredin

TITLE: Executive Director and Air Pollution Control Officer, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Question: What is Employer Based Trip Reduction (eTrip) Rule 9410?

Answer: It helps larger employers establish a plan to encourage employees to reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips, and consequently, reduce emissions.

Q: Why was this rule proposed?

A: Vehicles produce the majority of overall emissions in the Valley, and a significant portion of those are work-related.

Q: What companies are subject to this rule?

A: There are several factors that determine if a company is subject to the rule including workforce size, number of hours worked and shifts worked. We have detailed guidelines at http://www.valleyair.org/Programs/Rule9410TripReduction/eTRIP_main.htm.

Q: How effective has it been? Has there been much participation by Bakersfield area employers?

A: Bakersfield has 73 worksites registered, and Kern County has 88 worksites registered.

Q: As of Jan. 1, 2012, worksites that are subject to the eTRIP rule must be able to demonstrate compliance with their submitted eTRIP plan. What, exactly, do they have to do?

A: The District is committed to providing employers with all the tools they need to develop a successful eTRIP plan, including templates and electronic reporting options.

Q: I understand there's a point system. What is it and how does it work?

A: An eTRIP plan needs to meet specific point targets. Employers choose from a list of measures to develop their plans and each measure has a point value.

Q: What are the different phases and deadlines for the program?

A: Phase 1, Marketing and Program Support, which required an employer to identify the outreach strategies they would use, had an implementation deadline of Jan. 1, 2012.

Phase 2, Services and Facilities strategy, which requires employers to provide onsite services that reduce the need for a vehicle during breaks and lunch, has an implementation deadline of Jan. 1, 2013.

Phase 3, Transportation, Alternative Schedules and Incentives, which requires employers to provide services such as van pools and incentives to directly facilitate alternative transportation, has a deadline of Jan. 1, 2014.

Q: People in Bakersfield love their cars, and we don't have as developed a mass transit system as many larger cities. Realistically, how much can we do in Bakersfield to reduce vehicle emissions?

A: Carpooling just one day a week would reduce commute-related emissions by 20 percent. There are some good mass transit programs in place, such as Golden Empire Transit, which has

a successful express route from Bakersfield to the Tejon Ranch Commerce Center, which reduces about 5 million vehicle miles per year.

Q: Is biking to work a viable option in Bakersfield?

A: Yes. Many communities are developing Bicycle Master Plans. Bike Bakersfield can help map routes for bike commuters to help make this a safe, viable option.

Q: What's the greater source of air pollution, vehicles or industrial activity?

A: Since the Air District was formed, stationary sources, which include industrial activity, have reduced their emissions by 50 percent, making the Valley's businesses and industries among the cleanest in the country. They are subject to more than 500 rules or rule amendments and have made billions of dollars in clean-air investments.

On the other hand, vehicles use – including diesel traffic, personal auto use and other vehicles – contribute the vast majority of the pollution we are presently dealing with.

Q: If employers want to contribute to cleaner air in the Valley, what can they do to get involved?

A: We invite them to become a Healthy Air Living Partner. This is a free program that has many tools and resources for any size employer to put clean-air programs into place. For information, visit www.healthyairliving.com.

Q: If someone works somewhere that doesn't have a formal plan, what can they do at the individual level to help the cause?

A: Making just one change, such as bringing your lunch to work or biking once a week, can reap big benefits in the drive to clean up the valley's air.

Q: Often in politics, there is a debate between people who want to protect the environment and people who want to protect jobs. Is it an either/or situation or can you do both simultaneously?

A: Clean air and protecting the Valley's economy are not mutually exclusive concerns. What good are rules that are impossible or economically onerous to meet? This is one of the beauties of the eTRIP rule: It does not dictate how a business can comply – it offers many options that a business can tailor to its own needs.

Q: Why should employers participate?

A: These alternative transportation strategies, when done with input from employees, will serve to improve workplace morale, increase productivity and yield other benefits in addition to reducing emissions. For example, the District has had its program in place a number of years, and enjoys great popularity and participation.

Because of the enormous challenges we face in the valley, we have some of the toughest regulations in the country on farmers, the oil industry and other industries.

Now, dealing with mobile source emissions is the most effective – and cost-effective – way to meet our clean-air goals.

Environmental group says state ignores fracking issues

Central Valley Business News.com, Thurs., March 1, 2012

California regulators have no idea how many oil and gas wells have been fracked in California despite having requested and received \$3 million in new funding in 2010 to regulate the practice, claims the Environmental Working Group of Oakland.

In hydraulic fracturing, commonly called "fracking," drilling companies inject a mixture of water, sand and chemicals into the ground under high pressure to release oil or gas trapped in underground formations.

The EWG says that even though the state lacks the data to prove its point, it still insists that drilling companies rarely use the technology in California.

But EWG says its research shows that fracking has been used in the state since 1953 “and is now widespread.”

The state Division of Oil, Gas and Geothermal Resources says it does not plan to monitor or manage use of the technology unless the legislature requires it or the agency is handed “evidence of manifest damage and harm,” says EWG.

“On the one hand, the Division remains in denial about fracking for oil,” says Bill Allayaud, EWG’s director of government affairs for California. “On the other hand, they ask for and receive funding to regulate it and then don’t do it – and have no plans to do it.”

EWG says its research documented the use of fracking in six California counties – Kern, Los Angeles, Monterey, Sacramento, Santa Barbara and Ventura.

Although the Division of Oil and Gas has reworded its factsheet on fracking multiple times, it has consistently said that practice is “uncommon” or “limited” in the state, repeating this view as recently as this month, the Oakland activist group says.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency recently found a number of “program deficiencies” in the state agency’s activities, noting that its regulation of other types of underground injection were inadequate to protect underground drinking water sources.

Since the state does not currently monitor, track or regulate fracking in any way, it can’t possibly know whether the technology is having harmful environmental effects, says EWG. Congress exempted fracking from federal environmental laws, including the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act.

“In the absence of state regulation, California residents have no protection against environmental damage from an industry that acknowledges that fracking carries risks that include spills, leaks, explosions, injury and even death,” EWG says.