

Air district offering grants to buy low-polluting vehicles

By David Castellon

Visalia Times-Delta, July 25, 2013

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is accepting applications for grants to help public agencies purchase alternative-fuel vehicles.

Cities, counties and public education institutions, along with water and irrigation districts in the Valley, can receive up to \$20,000 per vehicle and up to \$100,000 a year from the air district.

Money from the Public Benefit Grants Program to purchase the plug-in and natural-gas vehicles is available on a first-come, first-served basis, and applications must be submitted by Sept. 30.

Get more details online at www.valleyair.org/Grant_Programs/GrantPrograms, and click on "Grants and Incentives."

Information also is available by calling 230-5800.

Car cleanup event slated for Saturday

Stockton Record, Friday, July 26, 2013

STOCKTON - Valley CAN (Clean Air Now) and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District will hold a Tune In and Tune Up car cleanup event Saturday, including emissions testing and vouchers for vehicles that do not pass.

The event does not take the place of a legally required smog test, but it does give residents some idea if their vehicle is likely to pass the real test, and if not, they will be eligible for as much as \$500 in financial assistance to make needed repairs.

The event runs from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the San Joaquin County Fairgrounds, 1658 S. Airport Way.

However, the gates open at 6:30 a.m. and early arrival is recommended. Expect a wait of two hours or more.

You must live in the Valley and have owned your car for more than six months.

Information: (800) 806-2004 or info@valley-can.org.

Aspen fire has burned nearly 9,000 acres

Sierra Star, Sunday, July 28, 2013

The Aspen Fire, which was caused by lightning and was discovered Tuesday, July 23, is still burning in the Sierra National Forest-High Sierra Ranger District. The fire is burning northwest of Huntington Lake near Mammoth Pool Reservoir below Stump Springs Road, north of Aspen Springs. As of Sunday morning, the fire has burned nearly 9,000 acres and is only 15% contained.

Total fire personnel on hand is more than 1,000.

The South Central Sierra Interagency Incident Management Team assumed command of the Aspen Fire at 6 p.m. July 24.

The team is working with the Sierra National Forest to manage suppression efforts.

Smoke from the Fire is impacting air quality in local communities. Individuals sensitive to smoke are suggested to remain indoors and keep windows closed, to minimize exposure to smoke.

The fire is in steep, rugged, inaccessible terrain. There is no imminent threat to the communities of Big Creek or Huntington Lake at this time.

Sixteen campgrounds in the area have been evacuated.

Pollution Regulators Set Sights on Off-Road

Strict vapor emission controls begin in 2018

By Michael Gardner
San Diego United-Tribune, Friday, July 26, 2013

Sacramento

The California Air Resources Board Thursday moved to tighten pollution controls on most new off-road vehicles even while they sit idle in the garage.

The regulation will start with 2018 models and is to be phased in over four years, potentially costing buyers 4 percent to 9 percent more. Existing vehicles are exempt.

San Diego County Supervisor Ron Roberts, who also sits on the state air board, voted to support the regulation. It passed unanimously.

The rule attacks vapor emissions from gas lines and fuel tanks rather than tailpipes, which already are regulated.

There were 850,000 off-highway recreational vehicles registered in California, including nearly 79,000 in San Diego County, according to a Department of Motor Vehicles tally at the end of 2012.

Regulators say stricter controls are needed as they struggle to comply with federal clean-air standards, particularly in Southern California and the San Joaquin Valley. The new controls will reduce harmful evaporative emissions from new vehicles by 70 percent when compared to the current models, they say.

But off-road enthusiasts like Bob Ham of Calexico worry that the cost of compliance — estimated at \$216 to \$465 depending on the vehicle by 2018 — will scare buyers away just as the market rebounds.

“This will put pressure on dealers already struggling to stay in business,” Ham said in a phone interview. He and others say the board should have delayed implementation until model year 2020 to give manufacturers time to offer cost-effective emission controls.

Regulators say sales have perked up, and that a 2018 launch allows the industry to prepare given its usual 18-month lead time for research and development before introducing new models. Delays also would add more emissions into the atmosphere for another two years.

In 2012, California dealers sold a combined 14,012 ATVs and motorcycles — the two most popular off-road vehicles. In 2011, those sales amounted to just 10,572, according to DMV figures.

The regulation is aimed at evaporative emissions that escape from the fuel lines and gas tanks, whether the vehicle is being ridden at Ocotillo Wells or parked for the workweek. Fifty-nine percent of the evaporative emissions occur when the vehicle is parked, compared to 29 percent that come from the tailpipe, regulators say.

Under the rule, manufacturers will most likely have to use newer materials to prevent permeation from fuel lines and gas tanks. There are also carbon canisters that can trap particles before escaping into the atmosphere — a technology used in cars for some time. Another tool is the pressure relief valve on the gas tank vent that can hold in vapors. Anti-tipping technology to prevent spills also must be added to the vehicles.

Evaporative emissions are “reactive organic gases,” one of which is benzene, that can be traced to an increased risk of cancer and neurological damage. Off-road vehicles account for nearly three-quarters of those gases.

Under the regulation, a newly bought off-road motorcycle, for example, could produce no more than 1 gram of these reactive organic gases per day starting in 2018. Currently, 10 to 15 grams escape from off-road motorcycles. In contrast, the average new car in 2018 will be responsible for just one-third of a gram. Affected vehicles include dirt bikes, ATVs, off-road utility vehicles and sand cars, among others. Professional racing motorcycles, snowmobiles, gas-fueled golf carts and go-carts are exempt.