

Free unofficial smog checks offered Saturday

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STOCKTON — It's a good thing the weather is expected to be cooler than normal Saturday, since long lines are expected for a "Tune In and Tune Up" event at the San Joaquin County Fairgrounds.

The event, which offers free unofficial smog checks to older vehicles and vouchers for up to \$500 in smog repairs to make the cars meet stringent pollution standards, is scheduled from 8 a.m. to noon, but lines form early.

The event, sponsored by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and Valley Clean Air Now, will provide San Joaquin County drivers who have owned their cars for at least six months a free vehicle emissions test.

Those that don't pass will receive the vouchers for emissions-related problems and must redeem them at participating STAR-certified smog check stations.

Since 2003, more than 15,000 cars have been repaired to meet state smog standards by the Valley CAN's Tune In and Tune Up program.

The program is among the most cost-effective methods to reduce vehicle emissions.

Especially in an area such as the Valley, where the smog sits and there is little chance of dissipation, such programs are essential to cut down on health problems related to air pollution. In the summer heat, there are many days considered unhealthy to sensitive groups, and others that are considered unhealthy to everyone.

Although scheduled to last four hours, the program might close early if the maximum capacity of vehicles is reached before then, so people are encouraged to arrive early.

Cars are seen on a first-come, first-served basis. And Valley CAN is offering free food and drinks at 8 a.m. as long as supplies last.

The tests are not a substitute for a formal smog check, and no smog certificates will be handed out.