School is back in session. How are your children getting to school? Have you thought about the air-quality impact associated with the daily practice of driving just one child a mile or two to school and then idling your vehicle while waiting to pick them up?

Emissions from vehicle idling during the back-to-school rush presents a significant air-quality problem in the San Joaquin Valley. The school day ends during peak ozone hours, and students are exposed to a noxious cloud of exhaust fumes as they depart from classes into a sea of idling cars, minivans and SUVs.

Late summer and early fall is also the time of year that the Valley is most at risk of exceeding the federal 1-hour ozone standard. Vehicle idling has been shown to be a major contributor to ozone pollution in August and September.

Consider alternatives to driving your child to school to help reduce ground-level ozone.

- Walk your child to school or organize a safe walking route to school for groups of students with one or more parents to accompany them. This is also known as a “walking school bus.”
- Encourage your children to bicycle and you can ride with them.
- Organize a carpool with other parents so that fewer vehicles are driving on a daily basis.
- Refrain from idling your vehicle while waiting to pick up your child from school.

District grant targets single truck owner/operators

The Air District is targeting single diesel truck owner/operators for a replacement grant of up to $50,000 per vehicle.

Funding is still available in the Truck Voucher Program to aid as many single owner/operators in the Valley as possible before the state deadline of Jan. 1 to replace older diesels with new, much cleaner trucks.

Seven million dollars must be allocated before the end of 2013 for truck replacements. Qualifying owner/operators are eligible for up to $50,000 toward each truck replaced, significantly lowering the amount of nitrogen oxide and particulate matter pollution in the Valley’s air.

Single owner/operators and small-fleet owners of on-road, diesel trucks subject to the Jan. 1 compliance date should contact the Air District’s grants department as soon as possible to apply. More information is available at: http://www.valleyair.org/Grant_Programs/GrantPrograms.htm#On-Road%20Voucher%20Incentive%20Program.