

News Release

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For Immediate Release



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Air Pollution
Control District

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Local News sections

Air District seeks input on school bus cleanup rule

Fresno, California – The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is soliciting public comment on a proposed rule to reduce emissions from diesel school buses. Public workshops on the draft rule will be at the three District offices at 1:30 p.m. on April 27 and 28 and at 10:30 a.m. on April 29. The offices are located at 1990 E. Gettysburg in Fresno, 2700 M St., Suite 275 in Bakersfield and at 4230 Kiernan Ave., Suite 130 in Modesto.

Rule 9310 (School Bus Fleets) would apply to school bus fleets that transport K-12 students in both public and private schools.

“This new rule would reduce schoolchildren's exposure to toxic air pollutants,” said Scott Nester, a planning manager for the Air District.

A study released in Oct. 2003 by the California Air Resources Board (ARB) showed that children riding diesel school buses are exposed to unhealthy levels of diesel exhaust on their way to and from school. Diesel exhaust is known to contain significant amounts of toxic air contaminants. The report estimated that riding a school bus for 13 years could increase a child's lifetime cancer risk by about 4 percent, and could increase respiratory symptoms by 6 percent.

“The goals of this new rule are to help reduce schoolchildren's and the public's exposure to diesel particulate matter and to reduce the NOx emissions that create ozone,” Nester said.

Oxides of nitrogen, or NOx, reductions are needed as the San Joaquin Valley moves to the “extreme” non-attainment classification for the federal one-hour ozone standard.

Because the Air District is prohibited from setting tailpipe standards for “mobile sources,” Rule 9310 would instead require school districts and other school bus operators to ensure their in-use fleets meet current state and federal tailpipe standards by 2015, and purchase only state-of-the-art school buses after January 1, 2005. The South Coast Air Quality Management District in Southern California and the ARB have adopted similar regulations for other types of fleets, including garbage trucks and transit buses. Mobile sources include cars, trucks and other vehicles, and are the Valley's largest source of smog-forming emissions.

“We will work with the schools, state and local agencies, and the state legislature to develop funding resources for this program,” Nester said, adding that fees collected from other air pollution rules might be a source of funding.

According to a recent survey, more than 2,700 school buses logged more than 38 million miles in the San Joaquin Valley in 2002. Older school buses generally emit more pollutants than newer models, and more than half of the Valley’s diesel school buses will be at least 15 years old by the time this new rule would take effect. Cleaning up these older buses would provide the largest part of the total benefit from the rule. New diesel engine technology, coupled with new low-sulfur diesel fuel and exhaust controls, can achieve 85 percent lower particulate-matter emissions, and 75 percent lower NOx emissions, compared to older buses.

Gasoline engines and engines fueled with compressed natural gas (CNG) emit fewer pollutants than diesel engines and would not be subject to the change-out provisions of Rule 9310. Nineteen school districts in the San Joaquin Valley have already switched some of their bus fleets to CNG; the Valley currently has 174 CNG school buses on the road. In the last five years, the Air District has provided grants to school districts totaling \$2.8 million for CNG buses and fueling facilities, and approximately \$1 million for installation of particulate control devices on 148 diesel school buses.

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