

Air pollution district wants businesses to be friendlier on Fridays

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- Marketing program hopes to convince businesses to help reduce air pollution
- 'Air-Friendly Fridays was developed for businesses'

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has launched a marketing campaign to try to convince businesses in the Central Valley to help clean the air by practicing what it's calling "Air-Friendly Fridays."

It says this will provide the opportunity for employees practice alternatives to workplace-centered activities that create emissions.

These changes would include carpooling, bringing a lunch, bicycling or walking to lunch and linking trips – all to get employees to drive less at least one day a week.

"Air-Friendly Fridays was developed for businesses," says Seyed Sadredin, the district's executive director and air pollution control officer. "By simply making one change, one day a week, in work-centered activities that create emissions, such as commuting to and from work, or driving out to lunch, the Valley's air quality will benefit significantly."

He claims "the camaraderie that can result is an added benefit to employees."

To encourage participation, more than 8,000 businesses are getting information from the air district on how they can get participate in Air-Friendly Fridays and how to become what the district calls "a Healthy Air Living partner."

Kettleman gains voice in process

Rebecca Plevin, staff writer

Vida en el Valle, Tuesday, Aug. 9, 2011

RANCHO CÓRDOVA -- Maricela Mares-Alatorre stood before the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board last Thursday afternoon and asked the board members to do something she believed would be unprecedented -- and maybe impossible.

Instead of voting on the project before them -- a proposed three-year extension of a bioreactor at Waste Management's Kettleman Hills Facility -- the Kettleman City resident urged the board to postpone its vote until they had heard testimony from more residents.

The town's residents, she said, had not been adequately notified of the meeting, and were unable to skip work to travel 224 miles one-way -- or more than three and a half hours -- to the meeting.

Appealing to the board members' hearts, Mares-Alatorre encouraged them to look beyond whether the bioreactor would meet waste discharge requirements, and focus instead on whether the poor, 88.8 percent Latino community in rural Kings County could shoulder more pollution or health problems.

At least 11 Kettleman City-area babies were born with birth defects between 2007 and 2010. A state investigation found no common cause for the birth defects.

"I've never seen a board deny anything -- they just don't do that," Mares-Alatorre said in her testimony before the board. "But sometimes these things call for heroes. They call for you to make a decision based not just on them having their ducks in a row, but on logic."

"I think if you use common sense, beyond the regulations, you might say, 'wow, this community is really overburdened and they have a lot of issues right now, and maybe it's not the best time to continue with this green project.'"

To her surprise, Mares-Alatorre's request was -- in part -- granted.

The regional water board voted 4-1 to delay its decision on the bioreactor -- a "green" technology in the research and development phase that uses liquid and air to transform and degrade waste -- until they could hold a hearing at a time, and in a location, more accessible to Kettleman City community members.

Board staff had recommended approval of the project, after concluding the continued operation of the bioreactor would pose no threat to water quality.

Board chair Katherine Hart said the majority vote was based on a desire to ensure Kettleman City residents had a voice in the permitting process.

Board staff said they followed protocol by publishing notice of the hearing in local newspapers, displayed it in the local post office, and mailing it to those who have expressed interest in the issue.

But a handful of Kettleman City residents who testified at the hearing, and 186 people who signed letters to the board, expressed dismay that they were not adequately notified of the hearing, and stated their desire to be involved at every stage regarding facilities that could impact their community.

"This board is very interested in environmental justice issues and we want to make sure that everyone is always considered and has a forum in which to air their concerns, so I think that's what the board was attempting to do," Hart said.

One unintended consequence of the board's decision is the continued hearing might be held very close to the day Waste Management's current bioreactor permit is slated to expire.

On Monday morning, board staff member Clay Rodgers said the next hearing has been tentatively scheduled for Sept. 13 in Kettleman City. If the permit is not renewed by Sept. 15, Waste Management will have to stop adding liquids to the bioreactor, according to Rodgers.

"We respect and understand the board's decision to hold the meeting closer to Kettleman City," Waste Management spokesman Cecilio Barrera said in an e-mail Monday.

After the hearing, the few Kettleman City residents who had traveled to the hearing celebrated their small, maybe temporary, victory in the parking lot.

"It's a tremendous day for Kettleman City and a great victory for communities," said Bradley Angel, executive director of Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice. "For the first time in history, Chem Waste did not get what they wanted, and the water board is changing how they do business, in terms of involving the public."

Obama calling for fuel standards for big vehicles

By Darlene Superville, Associated Press
In the S.F. Chronicle, Tuesday, Aug. 9, 2011

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Fire trucks and concrete mixers, semis, heavy-duty pickups and all trucks in between will, for the first time, have to trim fuel consumption and emissions of heat-trapping gases under new efficiency standards being announced Tuesday by President Barack [Obama](#).

The White House says the standards the president was announcing will save businesses billions of dollars in fuel costs, help reduce oil consumption and cut air pollution. The standards apply to vehicle model years 2014 to 2018.

Senior administration officials said the new targets affect three categories of vehicles.

Big rigs or semis will have to slash fuel consumption and production of heat-trapping gases by up to 23 percent. Gasoline-powered heavy-duty pickups and vans will have to cut consumption by 10 percent, or by 15 percent if the vehicles run on diesel fuel.

The standards also prescribe a 9 percent reduction in fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions for work trucks, which include everything from fire trucks and concrete mixers to garbage trucks and buses, according to the officials, who requested anonymity to speak before the formal announcement.

Obama had planned to unveil the standards at a trucking business in Virginia, a state crucial to his re-election hopes, but the White House canceled the trip Tuesday morning without explanation. Instead, the president planned to meet privately at the White House with industry officials to discuss the new standards.

The officials projected savings of 530 million barrels of oil and \$50 billion in fuel costs over the expected lives of the vehicles covered by the new standards, along with improved air quality and public health.

The administration released no miles-per-gallon equivalent for the new standards, saying that doing so would be confusing given the different categories of vehicles, the different types of vehicles in each category and the varying payloads that each one carries.

Officials did stress that the costs of making the trucks more fuel-efficient — ranging from hundreds to thousands of dollars per vehicle — will be recouped through reduced fuel costs over the lifetime of the vehicles.

It's the second round of fuel efficiency standards in the past month.

Last month, Obama announced a deal with automakers to double overall fuel economy to 54.5 mpg by 2025, starting in model year 2017. [Cars](#) and light trucks now on the road average 27 mpg.

That followed a 2009 deal committing cars and trucks to averaging 35.5 mpg by model year 2016.