

Air district to launch Clean Air Center grant program

The Hanford Sentinel, Calif., Wednesday, April 27, 2022

Apr. 27—The Valley Air District will launch the new Clean Air Centers pilot program on May 1. The program was established by AB 836 and provides the Valley Air District \$750,000 in funding for grants to provide portable air cleaners in support of creating a network of clean air centers to provide vulnerable populations a respite from wildfires and other smoke events.

The guidelines established by the California Air Resources Board provide the San Joaquin Valley with resources to assist in creating clean air centers at schools, community centers, senior centers, sport centers, libraries and other publically accessible buildings that would most effectively protect the vulnerable populations.

The Valley Air District and other public health agencies throughout the Valley recommend that residents take health-protective actions to stay safe when smoke from catastrophic wildfires affects the Valley.

Some of these actions include staying indoors, the use of portable air cleaners or high efficiency filters to remove fine particles from the air, planning ahead and creating a "clean room", and if unable to use fans and air conditioning in the home, to seek a more protective location during poor air quality.

"The Clean Air Centers Pilot Program will serve as the next key component in protecting Valley residents in the most vulnerable communities", said Samir Sheikh, Valley Air District air pollution control officer. "This program will help to create a network of accessible facilities to find respite from the damaging effects of smoke events for communities that are the most vulnerable and face the greatest challenges in protecting themselves during wildfire events."

The Valley Air District will host an informational public workshop for interested eligible parties Thursday, April 28, from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. via Zoom.

The meeting can be accessed at ID 845 9836 4595 Passcode 715777 <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84598364595?pwd=ZmNkeDVBmk1UZkN0ZU5zVGNpYzZoQT09>

During the workshop, staff will discuss eligible project types, program priorities, applicant responsibilities, and general program requirements.

For more information on this and other Valley Air District grant programs, visit www.valleyair.org/grants or call 559-230-5800.

Volvo Trucks Customer Deploys Volvo VNR Electric Trucks

By Brooke Just

Rental Equipment Register, Wednesday, April 27, 2022

The Volvo VNR Electric model was designed as a sustainable transportation solution for local and regional distribution, pickup and delivery, and food and beverage distribution.

Producers Dairy, a dairy processor and direct-to-store supplier, will now deliver quality, farm-to-table freshness with zero tailpipe emissions through the integration of two Volvo VNR Electric trucks into its fleet. The Volvo VNR Electric trucks are the first commercial, battery-electric Class 8 trucks to be deployed in California's Central Valley and were showcased at an event at Producers Dairy's corporate headquarters in Fresno, Calif.

The Volvo VNR Electric model was designed as a sustainable transportation solution for local and regional distribution, pickup and delivery, and food and beverage distribution. The two Volvo VNR Electric units will be the first Class 8 battery-electric vehicles in the company's fleet of more than 300 trucks and will service regional distribution routes from its Fresno-based manufacturing facility to grocery stores in communities along the 40-mile stretch of Highway 99 from Selma to Madera, Calif.

"Through the deployment of its first two Volvo VNR Electrics, Producers Dairy is truly leading by example on the path to a more environmentally friendly future, which is at the core of the company's mission," said

Peter Voorhoeve, president, Volvo Trucks North America. “Our team is grateful for the investment that our dealer partner, Affinity Truck Center, made in becoming the Central Valley’s first Volvo Trucks Certified Electric Vehicle Dealer to provide Producers Dairy and other customers in the region with premium support to maximize the uptime of their Volvo VNR Electric trucks.”

Producers Dairy is a third-generation family business run by the Shehadey family. With a focus on nourishing lives, they prioritize the health of their community from the care of their cows to the sustainable delivery of their naturally produced dairy products.

“We are excited to integrate these first two Volvo VNR Electric trucks into our fleet as we work to reduce emissions on our local delivery routes,” said Scott Shehadey, president, Producers Dairy. “This investment in zero-tailpipe-emission technology aligns with our corporate mission to enhance the quality of people’s lives, and we are grateful to each of the organizations that supported us with today’s successful vehicle deployment, including Volvo Trucks, Affinity Truck Center, the California Air Resources Board (CARB), and AMPLY Power.”

CARB supports

The project was supported by funding from CARB’s GGRF Zero Emission Drayage Truck Project as part of California Climate Investments. Producers Dairy received \$1.25 million to purchase, install, and integrate two Volvo VNR Electric trucks into its larger fleet.

“The deployment of two zero-emission battery-electric trucks at Producers Dairy’s Fresno-based manufacturing facility shows how companies can make innovative, real-world steps to improving air quality in the Central Valley region,” said Tania Pacheco-Werner, CARB member representing the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. “I applaud the project partners for their collaboration on getting these fully electric trucks on the road and look forward to seeing Producers Dairy utilize the lessons learned from this deployment to scale up its battery-electric fleet and charging infrastructure in the future.”

Producers Dairy worked with AMPLY Power to design and install the supporting charging infrastructure for its Volvo VNR Electric trucks and utilizes AMPLY’s Omega digital solution to monitor charging infrastructure, optimize energy costs, and maximize charger and vehicle uptime. The Fresno dairy processing facility includes two 150 kW DC fast chargers and the ability to scale for increased capacity in the future. AMPLY Power will work with Producers Dairy to maximize charging efficiency and cost-effectiveness with intelligent charge management services, while ensuring that the trucks are available to complete their mission-critical deliveries.

Affinity Truck Center’s Fresno dealership will support Producers Dairy with an integration of VNR Electric trucks into its fleet through the Volvo Gold Contract, which incorporates maintenance, full coverage on components, and towing and uptime services.

“Deploying battery-electric fleet trucks can be a complex process that requires a customer to engage numerous stakeholders and begin planning 12 to 18 months in advance for charging infrastructure needs,” said Kim Mesfin, president, Affinity Truck Center. “As a Volvo Trucks Certified EV Dealer, we are ready to support fleets throughout the Central Valley with their electromobility goals—including identifying ideal routes and vehicle configurations, support with incentive funding, identifying infrastructure partners, and maximizing vehicle uptime through the Volvo Gold Contract.”

To learn more about Volvo Trucks North America and the Volvo VNR Electric, visit the company website.

\$30 million program will bring electric school buses to Valley. ‘We’ll get a lot of demand’

By Gregory Weaver

Fresno Bee, Thurs., April 28, 2022

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District launched a \$30 million program to subsidize the cost of electric school buses at its April 21 meeting.

The funds will help replace the Valley's aging school bus fleet, which is, on average, significantly older than school buses in other California regions, according to Todd DeYoung, district director of strategies and incentives.

The program will help disadvantaged Valley school districts buy up to 10 electric school buses, build out charging infrastructure, and send old diesel-engine buses to the scrap yard.

"Replacing the Valley's aging school bus fleet to minimize the impact on children residents has been a high priority for Valley communities for years," DeYoung said, crediting Assembly Bill 617 community steering committees across the Valley for making bus replacements a high priority for the air district.

He added that retiring the oldest buses will provide benefits to student health. The older school bus models can leak toxic diesel tailpipe pollution into the cabin where kids sit.

The potentially hazardous school buses make up 16% of the school bus fleet for 11 rural school districts in Fresno County, said Shelly Thomas, director of transportation at Southwest Transportation Agency.

DeYoung also said the Valley's existing electric bus program, funded by Volkswagen's \$2.9 billion settlement for the diesel exhaust scandal five years ago, is "significantly oversubscribed." He said the new funding will help alleviate the pent-up demand for the clean-air tech from Valley school districts.

"Anecdotally, it is said that the San Joaquin Valley is where old school buses go to die," said DeYoung.

Samir Sheikh, executive director of the air district, said he hopes the district's clean bus funds will prepare transportation planning experts across the Valley for federal and state funds for clean buses that are coming down the pike.

"Building off the Volkswagen work...this will keep the process moving forward. We'll get a lot of demand," Sheikh said. "We hope, with this, it'll help get (school) districts here in the Valley ready for some of the new state and federal funds."

AIR DISTRICT MOVES TO IMPROVE PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISORIES

The air district also moved to establish a working group, consisting of public health experts and local education leaders, to overhaul its public safety advisory program, outdoor activity guidelines, and air quality monitoring databases.

A Fresno Bee essay last November said that during last fall's wildfire season, some Valley school districts allowed athletic events to continue through the smoke's most harmful impacts, and the air district's pollution monitoring network could not keep up with the rapidly changing air quality impacts from the smoke's drifting plumes.

Sheikh said the air district's public health advisory guidelines "could change, based on the latest health research" about the toxic effects of PM2.5 pollution, and that the district will work with the state to establish comprehensive outdoor activity guidelines when wildfire smoke pollutes the air.

"There could be more opportunities to take advantage of what's out there, establish better practices...and make some differences with what we're doing here," said John Klassen, director of air quality science for the district.

Klassen said that leveraging public air monitoring networks, which utilize low-cost air pollution sensors, could improve the district's pollution monitoring coverage.

"This provides a lot more information to look at when we have wildfire events," Klassen said, citing websites like EPA's AirNow and Purple Air.

Tim Tyner, co-director of the Central California Asthma Collective, said the highly precise Purple Air monitors can be algorithmically calibrated to inform the public with accurate, real-time air quality information.

Leveraging the Purple Air data would significantly improve the coverage of the air district's current PM2.5 monitoring network, a Fresno Bee analysis found. The air district's current program relies on data from 23 PM2.5 sensors spread across the Valley, according to air district records. In comparison, Purple Air has 195 sensors operating in the San Joaquin Valley.

Cynthia Cabrera, a policy assistant at Central Valley Air Coalition, urged the air district to improve its air quality notification and advisory programs in the Valley's fight to avoid all unnecessary exposures to wildfire smoke, adding that the air watchdog programs are needed "to support the health and well-being of Valley residents."