

Workshop to discuss new electric vehicle rebates

By Ben Keller

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The Drive Clean! Rebate Program, a new incentive offered by the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, is aimed at helping those considering the purchase of a plug-in electric vehicle to take the plunge.

The District will be discussing the program during a free workshop from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on March 17 at its Fresno office, 1990 E. Gettysburg Ave.

With grant funding from the California Air Resources Board, the program provides rebates ranging from \$1,000 and \$3,000 for those who purchase plug-in electric vehicles and other types of clean vehicles.

The program will help offset the cost of vehicles like the Nissan Leaf, the Mitsubishi i-MiEV, the Tesla Roadster and others. The current Chevy Volt is not eligible for funding. Current models include a small combustion engine.

Co-sponsored by the California Center for Sustainable Development, the workshop will present information on the financial and environmental benefits of owning an electric vehicle, the latest models and where some local charging stations are. Other incentives like the Clean Vehicle Rebate Project administered by CARB will also be addressed.

Participants will also get a chance to test drive the latest electric vehicles and talk to electric vehicle owners in the Fresno area.

Those wishing to attend the workshop can register [here](#). Admission is free and includes lunch, but since space is limited, those looking to participate should register as early as possible. More information can be found by calling the District at (559) 230-6000.

UCSD science drives U.S. climate plan

Mike Lee

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Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Thursday issued an international "call to action" on climate and air pollution influenced heavily by research at UC San Diego, launching a new phase in efforts to avoid the worst effects of global warming.

Clinton unveiled a fast-attack plan against methane, soot and other atmospheric pollutants that are said to account for 40 percent of climate change and worsen air quality even though they remain in the atmosphere for just a matter of days or years. She was joined Thursday in Washington by international environmental leaders in what some described as a modest but critical six-nation stand against global warming agents that have gotten much less attention than carbon dioxide.

"It's the first formal recognition by a group of developing and developed countries that we need to target the non-CO2 climate forcers to get fast mitigation while we continue our deliberate pace with the global negotiations that focus on primarily on CO2," said Durwood Zaelke, president of the Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development in Washington, D.C. "We need to scale up the coalition and funding immediately."

Two local researchers who have spent their careers studying the role of atmospheric pollutants played a leading role in drawing attention to problems posed by short-lived gases and particles: Veerabhadran Ramanathan a climate and atmospheric scientist at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, and Mario Molina, a Nobel laureate at UC San Diego's chemistry department. They formally framed the fast-action approach in a top-tier science journal three years ago.

The scientists said the world can buy time to trim carbon dioxide emissions — a major political and practical challenge that's likely to take decades. The idea is to prevent the global climate

from reaching a “tipping point” in which irreversible atmospheric changes create a doomsday scenario. It’s not clear when that would happen and some doubt it ever will.

“I have been working on this for 35 years, so for me it was such a historic moment,” Ramanathan said after the State Department event in which his work was cited. “What is significant here is that we have found common ground among all the nations. ... It not only helps climate change, it gets rid of the brown clouds (of air pollution over Asia) and saves millions of lives and crop damage. It’s hard to argue against.”

Ramanathan and colleagues recently issued a United Nations/World Meteorological Organization report in which they found that focusing on fast-action measures could slow global mean warming 0.9 degrees by 2050, prevent between 700,000 and 4.7 million premature deaths each year and increase global crop yields by up to 135 million tons per season. While all regions of the world would benefit, they said, countries in Asia and the Middle East would see the biggest health and agricultural gains from emissions reductions.

Non-CO2 pollutants individually are less significant than carbon dioxide and come from multiple sources. That makes attacking them less straightforward than reducing emissions from power plants and autos, the main sources of carbon dioxide, which lingers aloft for centuries.

The upside is that existing technology can sharply reduce non-CO2 climate pollutants. For instance, black carbon can be trimmed by adopting more diesel particulate filters on vehicles and by deploying clean-burning cookstoves. Other improvements can be made by capturing methane at landfills and coal mines around the world, using less-polluting refrigerants and managing agricultural waste to reduce the release of gases.

“Historically this non-CO2 approach has enjoyed broad political support from conservatives, businesses and public health advocates,” Zaelke said. “(It) has the potential to expand the coalition involved in fighting climate change and to build momentum for a pragmatic climate effort.”

Clinton’s coalition includes six countries — three from the developing world and three from the developed world — and the United Nations Environment Programme. The nations are the United States, Mexico, Canada, Sweden, Bangladesh and Ghana. The secretary said the effort launched with \$15 million, but she didn’t detail how it would be spent.

Even though the initial amount of money and the number of participants is modest, Ramanathan is using his stature to push for complementary efforts by top officials in India, China and elsewhere. He also has spent years developing ways to slash soot pollution from home cooking fires in India. Through what he calls Project Surya, Ramanathan said he has identified a clean-burning cook stove that can slash emissions, improving indoor air quality and curbing climate pollutants at the same time.

The challenge now is to deploy the stoves widely. “We are ready to scale up,” Ramanathan said, adding that Thursday’s announcement should generate more interest in his project.