

Green building code will begin this month

Jim Downing

Sacramento Bee, Thursday, Aug. 13, 2009

The state's green building code, the first of its kind in the nation, takes effect this month, the California Building Standards Commission announced this week.

The code standardizes practices for reducing the environmental impact of buildings in a variety of ways, from cutting water and electricity consumption to using less resource-intensive building materials.

Application of the code is currently voluntary. It was adopted last year as a step toward mandatory green building standards, which Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has called for by 2010, according to a statement from the building standards commission.

The use of gas, electricity and water in buildings accounts for about a quarter of California's greenhouse-gas emissions. Reducing those emissions is a central strategy in the state's war on global warming.

The green building code is available at www.bsc.ca.gov.

Why 'clunkers' program won't take some of the most polluting cars

The classic car lobby pushed to exclude vehicles made before 1984, protecting the market for parts. Consumer and environmental groups, too busy fighting for fuel efficiency, went along with it.

By Ralph Vartabedian and Ken Bensinger, staff writers

L.A. Times, Thursday, Aug. 13, 2009

Nearly 5 million of the nation's most polluting vehicles were quietly excluded from the popular "cash for clunkers" program after lobbyists for antique auto parts suppliers and car collectors persuaded the government to shut out cars built before 1984.

The restriction has prevented consumers nationwide who own older cars and trucks from cashing in on the \$3-billion federal program even though many don't consider their jalopies to be collectors' items.

When the federal government announced the rebates of up to \$4,500, Chris Hurst said, it looked like the perfect time to unload his gas-guzzling 1981 Ford F-150 pickup. Hurst, who lives in the Sierra foothills north of Fresno, was surprised to discover his truck was too old to qualify.

"If we could have gotten that rebate, it would have worked perfectly for us," said Hurst, who is now trying to sell the vehicle, equipped with Ford's biggest V-8 engine, for \$1,600.

The restrictions were pushed by lobbyists for the Specialty Equipment Market Assn., a Diamond Bar group that represents companies that sell parts and services to classic and antique car collectors. The group, as well as classic car enthusiasts, have opposed cash for clunkers because they don't want older vehicles to be destroyed.

When the proposals for a clunker buyback program surfaced early this year, the specialty equipment association opposed the entire concept because such a program could shrink the size of the market for aftermarket parts. The association eventually got lawmakers to adopt the age limit.

"We are very pleased that Congress was able to include that in the program," said Stuart Gosswein, director of regulatory affairs at the association.

The association represents more than 7,000 companies that make all manner of auto-related products, including reproduction Model T tires and AMC Gremlin upholstery. The powerful

interest group has won legislative battles nationwide to protect owners of classic cars and hot rods from laws covering vehicle noise, emissions tests and much else.

The cash-for-clunkers legislation was sponsored by Rep. Betty Sutton (D-Ohio) and Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.). Neither returned calls seeking comment. The final wording of the bill, including the provision requested by the interest group, was ironed out in a legislative conference committee and attached to a military spending bill.

Consumer and environmental groups reluctantly went along with the provision because they were fighting for any rule that would push consumers to buy more fuel-efficient vehicles than the ones they were trading in.

"I don't know that the program makes a whole lot of environmental sense," said Lena Pons, a policy analyst for Public Citizen, which pushed for tougher fuel-economy standards. "There is not a whole lot of justification for the classic car industry to block older vehicles from being traded in."

Other critics fault the age limit on economic grounds, saying it makes little sense even for collectors.

"If I own a 30-year-old Mustang, the value of my car goes up if others get destroyed," said Chris Edwards, an economist for the libertarian Cato Institute. "It is a typical industry loophole that doesn't protect the little guy, but does protect some special interest group."

Many Americans don't have the money to buy a new car, said Dan Baker, a part-time handyman and gardener in Greenville, S.C., who said he wished he could have gotten a rebate to upgrade to a better used vehicle.

"I'm the kind of person this program could have helped," he said.

Baker is trying to sell a brown 1980 Oldsmobile Cutlass SS with a broken air conditioner and rusty fenders for \$1,200.

"It's just an old car with 101,000 miles on it," said Baker, who hopes to join the ministry in the near future. "It is not a classic."

Groups representing salvage yards and service garages also derailed a provision in the bill that would have required the entire drivetrain of traded-in clunkers to be destroyed. Junkyards are now permitted to strip and resell all parts of the vehicles except the engines.

Other countries have instituted cash-for-clunkers programs, but they haven't placed restrictions that block older cars from being traded in.

Germany's version, which began in January, offered 2,500 euros (a little more than \$3,500) for any car older than nine years. Britain, Spain, France and several other European countries have instituted programs open to cars older than 10 years. Japan's program, instituted this spring, pays 250,000 yen (about \$2,600) for cars older than 13 years. Proponents of the age limit argue that older vehicles not only represent a very small portion of the nation's overall automotive fleet, but also aren't driven very much and thus their tailpipe emissions don't contribute heavily to global warming.

There are 4.8 million vehicles older than 25 years on the road in the U.S. today, representing about 2% of all registered vehicles, according to research from Experian Automotive. The percentage of old vehicles in California is even higher, nearly 3%, according to the California Department of Motor Vehicles. Data from the Oak Ridge National Laboratory suggests that vehicles are driven half as many miles annually after 10 years on the road as when new.

"Most guys I talk to drive their collector car 3,000 miles, tops," said Daniel Strohl, associate editor of the blog at Hemmings Motor News, a publication for auto enthusiasts that also called for the age limit. "The total amount of pollution from a very small pool of cars is really very minor."

State regulators sharply contradict that assertion. Experts at the California Air Resources Board say cars built before modern engine controls were fully developed in the 1980s are significantly dirtier than new cars.

For example, a 1965 Chevrolet Malibu, when new, produced 400 times the smog-forming pollutants that a new 2010 Malibu produces, said John Swanton, an air pollution specialist with the board. Thus, an old Malibu driven only 1,000 miles per year produces as much pollution as a new Malibu would in 400,000 miles.

A major reason is that cars made before the mid-1970s lacked catalytic converters. Yet many states, including California, exempt those very vehicles from smog control laws. Those loopholes are also the product of lobbying by the classic car industry.

Smog exemptions "are something we absolutely support," said Steve Moskowitz, executive director of the Antique Automobile Club of America. "These cars literally can't meet those standards," said Moskowitz, a former auto dealer who collects Oldsmobiles dating to 1903.

Older vehicles also are among the least fuel efficient. In 1975, the overall new-car fleet averaged just 13 mpg, according to government data, compared with 22 mpg in 1985.

And although some old cars are real classics, others are truly just clunkers, said Leslie Kendall, curator of the Petersen Automotive Museum.

"There are some 50-year-old cars that are only good for transportation," Kendall said.

Los Angeles attorney Chia Evers was excited about using cash for clunkers to buy a new hatchback, such as a Scion xA or a Nissan Cube.

But she was disappointed to discover that her 1973 Volkswagen Beetle was too old to qualify as a trade-in.

"I feel really guilty about the smog," said Evers, who recently started her own practice and doesn't have enough money to buy a new car without an incentive. "Driving old cars is fun, but the gas mileage is terrible."

While their glaciers melt and rivers dry, China and India only add to climate woes

By Joel Brinkley - McClatchy-Tribune News Service

In the Merced Sun-Star and Modesto Bee, Thursday, Aug. 13, 2009

WASHINGTON -- The Himalayan glaciers are melting. On some of the range's lower elevations, ice fields are now ponds.

Those glaciers supply most of the water used in India, China and the Asian nations in between. So you would think that fact would be lying heavy on the mind of Yu Qintai, China's chief negotiator to the global climate negotiations when, a few days ago, he declared that climate-change negotiations culminating in Copenhagen this December "cannot fail."

"The Copenhagen conference must succeed for the sake of mankind."

Great rhetoric, but as usual Yu blamed everyone else, particularly the United States, for the world's climate-change problem - even as his own country emits more greenhouse gases than

any other nation on earth and continues to build a coal-fired power plant almost every week. Already, China generates 80 percent of its electricity by burning coal, compared to 34 percent in the United States.

China and India are partners in crime. Both countries like to preach to the West that the industrialized nations must do more, set higher targets, reach their goals faster, while they continue their own heedless behavior. In fact, China and India have agreed on an emissions goal - for the Western nations, not themselves: A 40 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 - probably an impossible target in just 10 years.

As if that were not enough, the two states are also calling for the United States and other Western nations to pay them up to 1 percent of their gross domestic product for climate-change initiatives. One percent of the U.S. GDP comes to \$14.4 billion. Yu calls all of that "quite fair."

Meantime, China is unwilling to say even when the nation's emissions will stop increasing. "No one wants more than us to see the peak of China's emissions," Yu said. "This will not only be in the interests of the Chinese people but for the whole world."

Sure.

None of this is terribly new. For years, China and India have been insisting they are exempt from climate-change obligations. The industrialized nations caused the problem, they insist, so the industrialized nations must solve it - even though, as measured by greenhouse gas emissions, China is now the most industrialized nation of all.

Testifying to Congress recently, Energy Secretary Steven Chu disparaged their position, saying: "Coal, as it's used today, in China and India, especially, where there's no trapping of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, mercury particulate matter, and no capture of the carbon dioxide, and when China is building coal plants at close to one a week, without the sequestering of any of these pollutants - it's a nightmare!"

The problem now is that the Copenhagen conference on climate change is just five months away. Late last month, Ban Ki-moon, the U.N. secretary-general, pleaded with China to change its stance. "Without China there can be no success this year on a new global climate framework deal," Ban said. The Chinese were unmoved.

Finally the United States, the world's second-largest emitter, is taking the issue seriously. And Yu is right when he says the world "cannot afford a failure."

In fact, China - already facing a severe drought - cannot afford a failure. A recent report by the Asian Society predicts that, before mid-century the Mekong River, which flows through China, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam, will be dry during the summer - the very season when rice farmers in all five countries rely on the Mekong's flood waters.

The Himalayan glaciers now provide 70 percent of the summer flow of the Ganges River, a lifeline for India and Bangladesh. In the spring, NASA's Earth Observatory division issued what it called an "alert warning" that rivers in the world's most populous regions are already losing water, citing an exhaustive study of global stream flows. Particularly threatened, NASA reported, were the Ganges, the Yellow River in northern China, the Mekong, the Niger in West Africa and the Colorado in the southwestern United States.

Rather than acting, India and China are feuding over which country should investigate the melting glaciers.

"We are talking to the Chinese about monitoring the Himalayan glaciers," said Jairam Ramesh, India's environment and forests minister, the Indo-Asian News Service reported. But India doesn't

want Chinese researchers "climbing all over India's glaciers," he insisted. In any case, Ramesh is a climate-change denier, at least as it relates to the glaciers.

"It is a highly emotive issue," he intoned, "but one has to be a little careful before we write the epitaph of the Himalayan glacier."

[Letter to the Patterson Irrigator Wed., Aug. 13, 2009](#)

Some good news

Editor,

There's good news coming out of the Bay Area.

It is reported that beginning next summer, agricultural exports originating from the San Joaquin Valley will be loaded onto barges at the Port of Stockton and hauled by waterway to the Port of Oakland.

That's good news not only for agricultural interests here in the valley but for commuters using the Altamont Pass. It is estimated to eliminate 4,900 truck trips a week needed to haul agricultural products to the Oakland port. That, in turn, is expected to eliminate 15 tons of diesel pollution yearly.

Each barge will eliminate the need for about 900 trucks. Low-emission diesel engine tugboats will propel the barges, and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District will contribute \$750,000 for updating the tugs' diesel engines.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, both ports, and the marine operator are combining efforts in a public-private partnership.

Local agricultural interests will benefit by increased efficiency, and commuters who daily use Interstate 580 and those in the valley who suffer from foul air quality will also benefit.

And the solution can be achieved without the cost of many millions of dollars.

Ron Swift, president WS-PACE.org, Patterson

[O.C. Register blog, Wednesday, Aug. 12, 2009:](#)

Smog agency: \$45 million in stim funds will fast-track hybrid trucks

posted by Pat Brennan, green living, environment editor

The region's smog control agency will spend \$90 million — half of that federal stimulus dollars — to fast-track development of hybrid trucks and buses for Southern California fleets, likely including at least one in Orange County.

The hybrids will be developed over the next two years under the guidance of the South Coast Air Quality Management District in Diamond Bar.

The trucks will be plug-in gasoline-electric hybrids, and will include utility and delivery trucks as well as shuttle buses. Building them could also spur larger economic effects.

"If these become commercialized, now there are opportunities for utilities to start putting in more infrastructure," said Matt Miyasato, assistant deputy executive officer at the air district. "They have to plug in somewhere. There's a potential for more jobs in that arena."

The Orange County Transportation Authority might use some of the trucks, and Southern California Edison also plans to use them.

The smog agency is using a \$45.4 million grant from the Department of Energy, part of an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act program meant to speed development of new batteries and electric vehicles.

The other half of the \$90 million includes \$32 million from agencies that would purchase the trucks and \$5 million from the California Energy Commission, as well as contributions from the plug-in hybrid system's producers and the non-profit Electric Power Research Institute.

While prototype versions of the hybrid truck technology exist — President Obama examined one on a recent trip to a Southern California Edison facility in Pomona — the technology will have to be fine-tuned to make it practical for uses by a variety of agencies, Miyasato said.

The Orange County Transportation Authority has expressed interest in hybrid shuttle buses, Miyasato said, although the transportation agency was not able to confirm its participation Wednesday. Other agencies hope to use "bucket" trucks and heavy-duty pickup trucks, he said.

"The devil's always in the details," Miyasato said. "We have to optimize the whole system so it works for different applications. It's not off-the-shelf technology by any means."

Eaton Corp. of Galesburg, Michigan, will produce the hybrid systems, and work with Ford Motor Co. to create the vehicles, he said.

About 50 fleets could purchase the trucks nationwide, including 14 in California and five in the south coast air basin, which includes Orange County.

The smog agency, which will oversee the project, plans to have 300 of the vehicles on the road by 2011, Miyasato said.

Edison plans to use 40 of the hybrid "bucket" trucks throughout its service area, said Ed Kjaer, director of electric transportation. They could allow the utility company to work at night because the arm and bucket would run on electric power so the trucks won't have to idle.

"We can actually be doing work on the distribution system at night, in stealth mode, and we're not disrupting the community," Kjaer said.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Secretary of Energy Steven Chu predicts a second industrial revolution with clean energy. For more information on this Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Secretario de Energía, Steven Chu prevé una segunda revolución industrial con energía limpia

Manuel Ocaño, Noticiero Latino
Radio Bilingüe, Wednesday, August 12, 2009

El secretario de Energía, Steven Chú anticipó que el mundo se dirige a una segunda revolución industrial que se basará en la generación y consumo de energía limpia. Chú dijo que en la próxima revolución industrial tendremos que desarrollar tecnologías que permitan al mundo crecer con prosperidad, pero este es el mayor cambio: "Con una gran reducción, esencialmente reducción y eliminación del monóxido de carbono". El secretario dijo también que el mundo se dirige a un consenso en el que países como China están de acuerdo en cambiar sus métodos productivos. Y agregó que tenemos las opciones de hacer las cosas bien, prosperar y el agradecimiento de nuestros descendientes, o suponer la fantasía de que no pasa nada y que estamos en 1950.