

State approves Valley's new clean air plan

By Turlock Journal Staff

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The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, working with state air officials and Central Valley stakeholders, have crafted a new plan aimed at making the region's air quality healthier for residents.

The new plan, unanimously approved by the California Air Resources Board, was developed through an extensive public engagement process by the Valley Air District and was supported by dozens of public meetings and workshops involving residents, businesses, public agencies and others that invested time to participate and provide valuable input.

The plan contains a range of new regulations, clean air grants, and other innovative measures across every sector that accelerate the deployment of new technologies and will reduce air pollution significantly in the years to come, including:

- Even further restrictions on the use of residential wood-burning devices and fireplaces, increased public education on the health impacts of wood smoke, and increased grants for transitioning to clean devices;
- New rules to further reduce air pollution from industrial sources such as boilers, steam generators, internal combustion engines, glass manufacturing facilities, agricultural conservation management practices, and other sources;
- Innovative strategy for reducing air pollution from commercial restaurants using underfired charbroilers;
- A suite of clean air grants for Valley residents, including grants for electric and other clean air vehicles, replacing gas mowers with electric mowers, grants for vanpools and other grant opportunities;
- A suite of incentive programs for Valley businesses including for the replacement of heavy-duty trucks, agricultural equipment, off-road equipment, electric dairy feed mixers, locomotives, almond harvesting equipment, commercial zero-emission lawn and garden equipment, and other grant opportunities.

"The adoption of this plan is the next step in our clean air journey that will require continued support from all Valley sectors and significant investment at the state and federal level. The District will continue its work with residents, businesses, and agencies throughout the San Joaquin Valley to implement this clean air plan and continue to improve quality of life for all Valley residents," said Executive Director and Air Pollution Control Officer Samir Sheikh.

In addition to the Valley Air District's new local measures, CARB is committing in the new plan to reduce air pollution from mobile sources under their control that now make up the majority of particulate-forming emissions in the Valley. These measures include new regulations for cleaner vehicles and enhanced performance standards for heavy-duty trucks, as well as new incentive-based grant measures to help replace aging heavy-duty trucks and agricultural equipment with new clean technologies. To implement the new clean air grant measures in the new plan, \$1 billion per year in new funding will be required from the state over the next five years.

Poor air quality causes a build-up of fine-particulate matter, which is a harmful form of pollution that has been linked to chronic lung disease, respiratory illness, heart attacks and premature death. The San Joaquin Valley has a unique geography, topography, and frequently stagnant weather conditions that create air quality challenges unmatched by any other region in the nation.

Despite decades of progress and significant reductions in air pollution, the region continues to face difficulty in meeting the latest federal health-based air quality standards.