

Like cooling facilities, clean air centers coming to Kern

By John Cox

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Just as Central Valley residents are given a place to cool down when temperatures soar, regional air quality officials are planning to set up centers where people can go to breathe filtered air when wildfires pollute the skies.

A \$5 million demonstration project established by state legislation in 2019 is expected to fund mobile air filters to be deployed at potentially hundreds of locations across the valley. Candidates would include senior centers, libraries and school gymnasiums, with special emphasis on serving medically vulnerable populations and poor areas where residents are less likely to benefit from air-conditioners equipped with filtration.

Kern County is expected to receive \$131,254, based on its population, for the purchase of new filters. That amount of money is expected to fund up to 130 mobile filters, which can be as large as a refrigerator.

The program kicks off next month, following a public workshop scheduled for Thursday morning to gather input. The agency administering the program locally, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, plans to solicit applications and then select locations for the filters so the new clean air centers can be open to the public, free of charge, in June.

Designated cooling centers might be selected to host the filters, but that will depend on proposals that come forward, said the air district's director of grants and incentives, Todd DeYoung. He said facilities that offer more hours of access will score higher in the selection process than those that are more limited.

"Obviously we want them open as long as possible during these episodes of high smoke impact," he said.

The project is a response to recent years' catastrophic wildfires that have resulted in severely degraded air quality. If deemed successful, based on measures like how many people make use of the centers, the effort may be expanded.

DeYoung said no filters have yet been purchased by the air district, but that efforts are being made to establish bulk pricing with manufacturers.

Air district spokeswoman Jaime Holt said the district's focus during recent years' wildfire episodes has been to ask people to stay inside where the air quality is generally better. But not everyone has access to an air-conditioner.

"Those are the folks that really need to think about" availing themselves of a clean air center, Holt said.

The valley air district, together with the California Air Resources Board, is co-hosting a public workshop on the program from 10 to 11 a.m. Thursday. The event will be conducted via Zoom using this link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84598364595?pwd=ZmNkeDVBmk1UZkN0ZU5zVGNPYzZoQT09>. The pass code is 715777. Participants can also participate toll-free by dialing 888-788-0099.

For information on the workshop, call the air district at 559-230-5800.

Producers Dairy Deploys First Volvo VNR Electric Trucks

By Work Truck Staff

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Producers Dairy announced it will now deliver farm-to-table goods 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, according to the company's news release.

The Volvo VNR Electric model was designed as a 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."

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.

"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."

Producers Dairy also worked with Amply Power to design and install the supporting charging infrastructure for its Volvo VNR Electric trucks.

"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 (SJVAPCD). "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."