Summer 2006

Clean Air News

"To preserve and enhance air quality in southwest Washington"

Clean Cars for Washington

The Washington state legislature approved a bill in spring 2005 that adopts California's clean car emission standards, but it was contingent upon Oregon adopting a similar program. In December 2005, Oregon adopted a similar program, allowing Washington's to proceed. The new standards will take effect starting with 2009 model year cars and will only apply to new cars and light trucks, not vehicles already on the road. It is estimated that the new regulations will reduce emissions in cars and light trucks by 25 percent and in larger trucks and SUVs by 18 percent.

"The majority of our region's air pollution comes from on-road vehicles so I'm very pleased to see such progress with reducing automobile emissions in the Northwest,"

says Bob Elliott, executive director of the Southwest Clean Air Agency.

Over the years, the biggest factor in air pollution has shifted from industry to our everyday activities, such as driving to work, mowing the lawn or painting. Addressing the emissions of future automobiles will help ensure that our region continues its strong record of clean air while the population grows.

Retrofits for Local Government Agencies

The Southwest Clean Air Agency is beginning to expand its diesel emissions reduction program to local government fleets. Diesel oxidation catalysts are planned to be installed on eligible C-Tran, City of Vancouver, City of Longview and Vancouver Fire Department vehicles.

"We are pleased to be able to offer this emmissions reduction program to our local governments," said SWCAA Executive Director Bob Elliott. "Our agency is pleased to have been able to help so many communities with the application of this innovative technology that will help reduce toxic air pollutants."

Air Quality Study Update
Columbia River Gorge

Photograph: Kathy Finkle—SWCAA

The Southwest Clean Air Agency and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality have completed the monitoring phase of the Columbia River Gorge Air Quality Study. Monitors at several locations in the Gorge measured particulate matter, oxides of nitrogen, sulfur dioxide, sulfates, nitrates, elemental carbon and organic carbon for two winters and one summer season. The agencies also used nephelometers to measure haze to gain a better understanding of visibility within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

In early 2007 the Southwest Clean Air Agency will release a Computer Modeling report that will document the dynamics and behavior of Gorge air pollution. The Columbia River Gorge Commission will be given a presentation in August 2007 after the overall Gorge Science Summary Report becomes available.

In March of 2006, the Causes of Haze in the Gorge (CoHaGo) Draft Report was released and it states that a coal-fired power plant and cows are significant contributors to the region's haze. The study shows how the Gorge experiences higher pollution in the wintertime, likely due to emissions from a coal-fired power plant. Emissions from the plant may also react with ammonia from a nearby dairy to contribute to the haze that funnels through the Gorge. The power plant was built 30 years ago and does not have air pollution control equipment that is required of new plants constructed today. Farms are also exempt from air quality regulations in Oregon.

However, these two sources are not the only contributors to air pollution in the Gorge. Sources of summertime pollution in the Gorge include the Camas paper mill, large ships, vehicles and smoke from forest fires and agricultural burning.

The study also found that air pollution from Portland in the summertime is not as significant as the wintertime pollution from the east. The summertime haze also dissipates faster as it travels through the Gorge. The final monitoring report will be published in July 2006 and a final computer modeling analysis will be available in January 2007.

The monitoring study and other Gorge reports are available on our website under Agency News at www.swcleanair.org/reports.html.

Southwest Clean Air Agency
11815 NE 99th Street, Suite 1294
Vancouver, WA 98682

Upcoming Changes to Outdoor Burning

Beginning January 1, 2007, outdoor burning will be banned in many additional areas of Washington state in accordance with WAC 173-425. Residents in towns with Urban Growth Areas will no longer be able to get land clearing or residential burn permits and will only be allowed to have small recreational campfires. Affected communities include Morton, Mossyrock, Toledo, Pe Ell, Winlock, Vader, Napavine, La Center, Ridgefield, Yacolt, Woodland and possibly Castle Rock. Land clearing burning will also be banned in other high population density areas.

The Southwest Clean Air Agency recognizes the significance of these changes to citizens in southwest Washington and will focus heavily on public education efforts to help spread the word about alternatives to outdoor burning. SWCAA will also seize the opportunity to remind residents that garbage burning and using a burn barrel is illegal in the state of Washington.

"By arming residents with information and alternatives to burning, we hope this change will be a smooth transition for everyone," says Bob Elliott, executive director of the Southwest Clean Air Agency.

These upcoming changes are the result of the 1991 Washington Clean Air Act governing outdoor burning in urban and high density areas. For more information and updates, stay tuned to our website at www.swcleanair.org throughout the year.

Update: Cleaner School Buses

Since the Washington State School Bus Retrofit Program was funded in 2004 by the Washington state legislature, more than 400 school buses in southwest Washington have received diesel oxidation catalysts. Thanks to this program, retrofitted buses now emit 30 percent less air pollution in the form of fine-particles coming out of the exhaust pipe. Statewide, almost 4,000 diesel school buses have been retrofitted with catalysts to reduce their emissions. This reduction in diesel emissions is helping improve the health of our school children.

The next progression to further improve the health of school children will be to install Closed Crankcase Ventilation (CCV) filters on school buses. This equipment will reduce the amount of diesel fumes that build up inside the school buses, especially when they are idling in school parking lots, and will further protect the lungs of school children.

Breathing diesel emissions is responsible for increased cases of asthma, increased hospital admissions and emergency room visits, and increased cancer risk over a lifetime. Although school buses are the safest way to transport children to and from school, reducing school bus exhaust emissions will further protect children's health.

Southwest Clean Air Agency

SOUTHWEST CLEAN AIR AGENCY

Bob Elliott, Executive Director
11815 NE 99th Street, Suite 1294
Vancouver, WA 98682.
Phone: (360) 574-3058
Fax: (360) 576-0925
www.swcleanair.org

BOARD MEETINGS

When: First Thursday of every month
Where: SWCAA offices
Contact: (360) 574-3058

CLARK COUNTY OUTDOOR BURN INFO

Contact: (360) 574-3058, ext. 6

BURN INFORMATION/OTHER COUNTIES

Contact: (800) 633-0709

NEWSLETTER

Kathy Finkle, Editor
For questions or comments regarding this newsletter, call
(360) 574-3058, ext. 39
or e-mail Kathy@swcleanair.org

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Welcome John!

John St.Clair joined the Southwest Clean Air Agency in April 2006, filling the position previously held by Wade Strange. He brings experience in a variety of air quality issues from his 12 years of working in the public service at the Benton Clean Air Authority. The last six years were spent working in air quality permitting for industrial/commercial facilities after receiving a master's degree in environmental engineering from Washington State University. His air quality career began in the eighth grade when he studied the effects of air pollution by creating small amounts of acid rain by burning coal, collecting it, and then sprinkling the “rain” on radish plants.

Take note:

Please make sure you have our current address in your records. The Southwest Clean Air Agency moved to EastRidge Business Park in September of 2003, though many companies are still using our old address. Our current address is 11815 NE 99th Street, Suite 1294, Vancouver, WA 98682.