

“Air Pollution Challenges for California’s Inland Empire”

October 10, 2007

Lynn Terry, Deputy Executive Officer, California Air Resources Board

New actions to improve air quality progress in this region are critical from a public health perspective. While air quality throughout southern California has dramatically improved over the past 30 years, the current health impacts of air pollution are serious. Research is finding adverse health effects at lower levels of air pollution and helping us better understand the nature of these impacts. One of the responsibilities of the California Air Resources Board is to do research and establish health-based State Air Quality Standards. These efforts set the backdrop for our air pollution control programs to improve public health.

Another key responsibility of the State Board is to ensure compliance with the federal Clean Air Act. Just two weeks ago the Board approved a comprehensive new air quality plan for this region designed to meet federal standards for PM_{2.5} particulate pollution and ozone. The plan represents a consensus among key agencies that aggressive new regulatory and incentive programs are needed to meet federal deadlines and improve public health. The California Air Resources Board, the South Coast Air Quality Management District, and Southern California Association of Governments have pledged to work together to implement this new State Implementation Plan or SIP.

At the heart of the plan is the need to address the goods movement sector. In 2006, the Board adopted a statewide strategy to reduce emissions from goods movement. We carried this strategy forward into the new federally enforceable SIP for this region. Legacy fleets of diesel engines—trucks, harbor craft, ocean-going ships, locomotives, and cargo handling equipment are all targeted for cleanup. The Board is exercising its authority to the maximum, as well as working with the South Coast Air District and local governments to secure and spend incentive funding in the most cost-effective way.

Cleaning up existing diesel fleets on this scale poses significant challenges, but the Board took a major step in July with the adoption of a comprehensive rule to reduce emissions from construction equipment. As part of this process, the South Coast Air District stepped up with a complementary incentive program. These fleet programs to retrofit or replace dirty engines are essential to clean air in this region. The natural replacement rate is far too slow to meet our public health needs.

Another challenge with the goods movement sector is the need for national and international action where California is preempted, or limited as a practical matter. While we intend to pursue emission reductions from ships and locomotives with all the tools at hand, more stringent national and international standards are needed. We continue to urge the federal government take the actions necessary to achieve clean air in California – we are not able to make up the difference. In this region, emissions from goods movement activities are the dominant source of diesel particulates and nitrogen oxide emissions.

Over the years, the technical staff of the California Air Resources Board and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, have worked in collaboration on the development of new engine standards for heavy duty diesel engines. These standards provide the foundation for the fleet cleanup rules the Air Resources Board is developing. The availability and timing of new diesel technologies is critical. The federal government should continue these new technology efforts nationally, and represent our interests in the international standard setting processes for ocean-going vessels and aircraft. In addition, because of the urgent need for emission reductions

to meet the 2014 PM2.5 deadline, the SIP identifies federal funding as a means to mitigate emissions under federal jurisdiction.

Southern California's regional ozone problem is especially evident here in the eastern part of the air basin. Air quality is clearly improving, but some of the highest regional ozone values are seen in this area and in the San Bernardino Mountains. This indicates that our regional strategy must focus on what it takes to meet air quality standards here and in nearby communities. The science of air pollution is complex, but the extensive monitoring system helps track progress and air quality modeling helps project the future benefits of the SIP. This scientific foundation gives us confidence that the necessary emission reductions have been targeted.

The new SIP will reduce nitrogen oxide emissions at double the previous rate, with measures that provide cleaner California fleets, interstate trucks, and locomotives. Particulate matter will be reduced through retrofits, engine replacements, or electrification. By 2014, we expect to achieve the federal annual PM2.5 standard and make substantial progress towards the ozone standard. These reductions will occur at a steady pace even with the projected growth in goods movement.

Although the SIP is regional in nature, it is important to note that as goods movement sources are cleaned up, localized exposures to air pollution will be greatly reduced. Addressing localized exposures to diesel particulates is a high priority and we look closely at this issue with each rulemaking. We use health risk assessments to better understand the impacts of various goods movement activities near ports, distribution centers, and rail yards. These assessments are important tools to help design clean air strategies.

Implementing the region's new air quality plan will be costly but the public health benefits make it essential that we succeed. The Air Resources Board staff has key rule development processes underway for port trucks, harbor craft, electrification for ships at port, and statewide truck fleets. These measures are part of our diesel risk reduction program, goods movement plan, and the SIP for this region. We are working closely with the South Coast Air Quality Management District in these efforts and also look to local government support for these measures. The SIP details a schedule for Board consideration of these rules.

Lastly, we have committed to work with the Air District and Southern California Association of Governments on a staff paper to explore longer-term strategies for the future. Innovative technologies, as well as the linkage between air pollution, transportation and land use, will be part of that discussion and we hope to engage a broad group of stakeholders in that public process.