Linda S. Adams
Secretary for Environmental Protection

Air Resources Board

Robert F. Sawyer, Ph.D., Chair
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Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor

August 15, 2006

Dear City and/or County Officials:

The Air Resources Board (ARB or the Board) has released a very encouraging report on the first full year of implementation for a regulation that reduces toxic diesel smoke from waste collection vehicles.

In September of 2004, ARB adopted the Solid Waste Collection Vehicle Rule. This rule requires those owning and operating garbage trucks to reduce toxic diesel smoke particulate matter (PM) from their fleets between 2004 and 2010. These reductions are achieved by buying trucks with newer, cleaner engines; equipping older trucks with catalysts or filters that reduce PM; or switching to alternative fuels such as compressed or liquid natural gas. By 2020, these actions will reduce diesel PM by 2,260,000 pounds.

In 2004, waste hauling companies were required to reduce diesel smoke by bringing 10 percent of their Group 1 trucks (1988-2002 model-year engines) into compliance. That would have amounted to 857 vehicles based on surveys showing 8,570 such trucks in California. In reality, waste haulers had 3,086 compliant Group 1 trucks by early 2005, a compliance rate of 35 percent. This was due to approximately 20 companies taking advantage of an "early compliance" option, giving them two years grace (from December 2007 to December 2009) for final compliance if they cleaned up 50 percent of their Group 1 fleet by July 1, 2005.

Waste haulers also went beyond ARB projections with regard to using Level 3 retrofit devices – the most effective devices available which reduce diesel PM by at least 85 percent. Back in 2003, staff estimated that 12 percent of California's waste trucks would use Level 3 retrofit devices in 2004. In reality, the use of Level 3 devices was 22 percent.

With regard to engine replacement, staff predicted in 2003 that only 4 percent of the Group 1 trucks would, by the end of 2004, have the cleanest engines available (those emitting 0.01 gram per brake horsepower-hour of PM). The 2004 survey showed use of these engines in the fleet at 24 percent, far exceeding projections.

But while the rule brings significant clean-air benefits, it also brings cost increases to waste collection companies. Filters and catalysts cost thousands of dollars. Trucks with new, cleaner diesel engines cost around $200,000 and alternative fuel trucks can run around $240,000. Since all California residents enjoy the health benefits brought about by the rule, the Board felt waste collection companies should not stand alone in shouldering the costs.

This being the case, in passing the rule, the Board expressed its hope that municipalities and service providers work together so that service fees reflect the service providers' costs for compliance. As both elected county officials and ARB Board Members, we urge you to work cooperatively with your local solid waste collection companies to appropriately compensate them for their compliance costs.

Sincerely,

Supervisor Mark DeSaulnier
Contra Costa County
Board Member

Supervisor Barbara Patrick
Kern County
Board Member

Barbara Riordan
Former Supervisor
San Bernardino County
Board Member

Supervisor Ron Roberts
San Diego County
Board Member