

# Clearing the Air

The Coalition for Clean Air Newsletter ♦ Winter 1999/2000

## **The 2000 Agenda – A Crucial Year Ahead for Regulation of Air Toxics, Zero Emission Cars, and State Smog Check Program.**

It's not just the first (or last) year of the millennium, but Y2K also promises to be a crucial year for air quality issues here in California and across the U.S.

First of all, thanks to pressure from the Coalition for Clean Air and other organizations, the South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) has finally agreed to revise their rules regulating toxic air pollution from stationary sources.

Currently, AQMD's Rule 1402 allows a risk of 100 cases of cancer per million persons exposed to toxic pollution before refineries, chrome-plating facilities, and other businesses need to clean up their act. That's way too high, and the Coalition has argued consistently that this figure should be lowered to no more than one case per million persons.

Although the AQMD has agreed to revise the rule, their current proposal leaves the allowable cancer risk at an unacceptably high level of 25 in a million. We will continue to push the AQMD to further strengthen this rule to better protect public health. The AQMD Board Hearing on Rule 1402 is scheduled for March 2000.

At the State level, the Davis Administration will be making some critical decisions relating to automobiles in the year ahead.

California's Smog Check program is falling far short of the pollution reductions relied upon in the State "Air Quality" or Implementation Plan (SIP). Unfortunately, the Legislature has significantly weakened the Smog Check program by providing exemptions

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## **Dump Diesel Campaign Heats Up!**

### **ARB Testimony, Release of School Bus Report, and Lawsuit are Focus as 1999 Winds Down.**

Anywhere you looked during the fall of 1999 there was the Coalition for Clean Air, working to protect the public health from toxic diesel exhaust, and bringing grief to the manufacturers and operators of heavily polluting diesel trucks and buses.

When the California Air Resources Board (ARB) held workshops in October on a proposal to regulate transit district buses, there was Coalition staff member Todd Campbell and other Coalition staff members and allies. Todd gave a thoroughly researched Powerpoint presentation on why the proposed rule was not strong enough.

The Coalition was joined at the hearings by the Union of Concerned Scientists, the NRDC, and several other environmental organizations. Todd and others presented strong technical arguments that the proposed rule really favored the continued use of diesel fuel buses. They argued that the rule should be strengthened to promote cleaner alternative fuel technologies, zero-emission buses, and to close several loopholes. ARB staff members are currently strengthening their proposal. You can voice your support for clean transit buses now by calling ARB Chair Dr. Alan Lloyd at 1-916-322-5840.

The clear high-light of Dump Diesel activities this fall, however, was the release of the Coalition for Clean Air's report, "Failing the Grade: How Diesel School Buses Threaten Our Children's Health."



This report, which took many months of preparation, documented the toxic nature of diesel exhaust, the dangerous levels of diesel emissions from aging school bus fleets in California, and the relative vulnerability of children to all types of air pollution.

The report also focused on the availability and practicality of clean fuel alternatives to diesel school buses. Among its recommendations was a call for a new state fund to help school districts purchase cleaner alternative fuel buses for their fleets.

The release of the report, written by Todd Campbell and Lesley Dobalian, nearly caused a media frenzy around the state. The Coalition planned press conferences for Thursday, Nov. 18<sup>th</sup> in San Francisco and Los Angeles, during the early afternoon, but the press would not wait. The Los Angeles Times had an excellent story on the report by environmental reporter Marla Cone in the morning paper, and this seemed to fuel the media interest.

KNBC-TV put together their own footage of school buses, and  
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# News In Brief:

## Coalition Launches Website:

The Coalition for Clean Air will launch its new website in January of 2000. Check it out at: <http://www.coalitionforcleanair.org/>

## Staff Changes at Coalition for Clean Air:

Unfortunately, the Coalition has to say goodbye, good luck, and many thanks to **Lesley Dobalian**, who has been working with the Coalition as a full-time graduate student intern for the past year. Lesley, who has completed her Masters in Public Health at UCLA was the co-author, with Todd Campbell, of the Coalition's report, "Failing the Grade: How Diesel School Buses Threaten Our Children's Health." The Coalition welcomes **Kevin Finney** to our staff. Kevin, who started in August, will focus on grant-writing, membership development, program and a share of policy advocacy and public education. Kevin attended UC Santa Cruz as an undergraduate. He has a M.A. in Political Science, and is currently on leave from the Ph.D. program in Political Science at UCLA. Kevin has experience in political campaign management, and has worked for environmental non-profits, including the Sierra Club Angeles Chapter.

## Hold the Date for Our Membership Meeting:

The annual membership meeting will be Saturday, February 26<sup>th</sup>, in the morning, place to be announced.

## Rent a Zero-Emission Car:

The next time you travel think about renting an electric car. These zero emission vehicles are now available at the Sacramento and Los Angeles airports through Budget Rent-a-Car. The GM EV-1 can be yours for a business trip to the state capitol, or how about Toyota's RAV-4 EV for your next family vacation to tinsel town. To reserve your EV call 1-877-EV-RENTAL.

**Support National Campaigns for Clean Cars by taking the Clean Car Pledge at:**  
<http://www.cleancarpledge.org>

## **Year 2000 Agenda— Toxics, ZEVs, Smog Check (cont'd from p. 1)**

for cars less than 4 years old or more than 25 years old. Compounding this problem, the Davis Administration has not fully implemented what remains of the program.

The current approach will create serious problems for California in February when the state is required to report to the U.S. EPA on the effectiveness of the Smog Check program. And when it is reported that the program is falling far short of its goal, California could be subjected to sanctions including loss of federal transportation funding. The Coalition is urging the Davis Administration to fully implement the program now and begin discussions immediately on how to make up the shortfall.

Another big test of the Davis Administration will be their handling of California's Zero-Emission Vehicle (ZEV) mandate.

The ZEV program requires that 10% of the cars sold in California be Zero-Emission Vehicles by 2003. Under pressure from the auto and oil industries, the Wilson Administration weakened the ZEV program in 1996 and again in 1998. The next review is scheduled for September 2000 and once again the program is under attack by auto manufacturers and could be overturned.

ZEVs have no tailpipe emissions, no evaporative emissions, no emissions associated with gasoline refining or sales. They also have many benefits beyond reducing smog. They reduce exposure to toxic air contaminants, reduce carbon dioxide emissions (the primary greenhouse gas), and reduce our dependence on oil. This is why the Coalition is mounting an all-out campaign to defend California's ZEV requirements.

## **Dump Diesel Campaign (cont'd from page 1)**

ran a story on the release of the report as early as 6:30 on Thursday morning. By the time 8:00 am rolled around, telephones were ringing off the hook at the Coalition for Clean Air offices, with TV and radio stations wanting to set up early interviews with Coalition staff and get the story on the air as soon as possible.

When the press conferences finally occurred in the afternoon, media interest was still high. In San Francisco, Executive Director Tim Carmichael was joined at the press conference by report co-author Lesley Dobalian, and Dr. John Balmes of the American Lung Association of California. In Los Angeles, Todd Campbell was joined by Andrew Weisser of the American Lung Association of California, Gail Ruderman Feuer of NRDC, and Randy Ertll of the CLCV Education Fund. Both press conferences were well attended, and the release of the report generated significant media coverage statewide for a long-neglected threat to children's health. If you or your organization would like to get involved in urging local school districts to purchase more clean alternative fuel buses, or in helping the Coalition's Dump Diesel campaign in other ways, please contact our office at (310) 441-1544.

Meanwhile, the Coalition for Clean Air and NRDC are also continuing their ground-breaking litigation against four major grocery chains for failing to comply with the public notification requirements set by Proposition 65, in connection with the operation of diesel trucks at large food distribution facilities. The law requires businesses to notify individuals exposed to toxic pollutants -- chemical substances known to cause cancer or reproductive harm. Diesel exhaust was identified as a carcinogen by the state of California in 1990, but grocery chains have failed to provide the necessary warnings. The ultimate goal of the litigation, however, is an agreement that grocery chains will reduce the public's exposure to diesel exhaust, through the purchase and use of clean alternative fuel trucks and equipment.