

San Jose Mercury News

October 25, 2007

California Air Regulators Adopt New Global Warming Standards

By Samantha Young/Associated Press

SACRAMENTO—Car tires must be fully inflated, trucks fitted with aerodynamic devices and cargo ship engines silenced when docked at port under global warming proposals adopted Thursday by state air regulators.

The California Air Resources Board approved six new mandates that manufacturers, shipping and trucking companies will be asked to follow beginning 2010 as a way to help the state get an early start at cutting greenhouse gases.

The board also approved rules that nonprofit groups must follow if they want to get credit for growing trees or changing how private forest lands are managed to store carbon dioxide.

"We see a lot of proposals and schemes on paper to reduce emissions, but it's in California where rules are being put in place to reduce greenhouse pollution," said Bill Magavern of Sierra Club's Sacramento division who testified in favor of the regulations.

The new suite of global warming regulations—coupled with three other initiatives adopted in June—could prevent an estimated 16 million metric tons of greenhouse gases from going into the air, according to an analysis by the Air Resources Board.

That's about 9 percent of the target California is trying to reach under its 2006 global warming law to cut emissions to 1990 levels by 2020.

"I think this set of measures we put out there is a big bite," said board chair Mary Nichols.

It's a much broader goal than initially was proposed earlier this year by the board. Regulators decided to expand the list after board members and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger were criticized by Democrats and environmentalists for moving too slowly to implement California's global warming law.

The additional regulations will come at a cost of billions of dollars for those who will be forced to buy new equipment or change how they do business, said Matthew Schrap, environmental affairs manager at the California Trucking Association.

Although they approved the regulations by an unanimous vote, several board members warned against moving too quickly on what they described as incremental rules. They suggested the board take a more a comprehensive, industry-wide approach when it crafts future global warming regulations.

"There is a greater chance to miss an unintended consequence, and that is a big concern of mine," said board member Sandra Berg, who is also president and chief executive officer of a paint company based in Los Angeles.

The new measures would require:

- Vehicles serviced for a tune up, smog check or oil change, to leave the shop with fully inflated tires.
- Gas-guzzling trucks and trailers to be fitted with aerodynamic devices like shield guards that are designed to make them more fuel efficient.
- Cargo ships docked at ports to turn off their engines and use electrical outlets for power.
- A ban on the chemical sulfur hexafluoride, which is used to make aluminum, magnesium and semiconductors.
- More stringent rules on using the greenhouse gas perfluorocarbon, which is used to make microchips and circuit boards.
- Changing the kinds of propellants that are used in spray cans.

In addition to the mandatory regulations, the board is also pursuing 35 other so-called early action measures that consumers and business could take on their own.

One of the biggest items was the adoption Thursday of forestry standards crafted last year by the California Climate Action Registry, a nonprofit group created by the state seven years ago.

The standards provide a method for land owners to measure how much carbon is be stored when forests are conserved, management practices are improved or trees are planted in areas where forests once grew.

"When it comes to offsets of carbon sequestering, there are a lot of cowboys out there," said Diane Wittenberg, president of the California Climate Action Registry. "We spell out how a project can measure reductions and certify those reductions."

The new forestry program will be limited to lands managed by nonprofit organizations, which critics complained was a small slice of the state's forest lands.

Regulators said they would address industrial forest lands, public lands and urban forests in later rules.