

Education the Focus of RAQC's 2007 Work Plan

Education is the priority for 2007 as the Regional Air Quality Council (RAQC) staff prepares to educate fleet managers and operators, Denver area school children, and the general public through several new and enhanced initiatives.

The strong education component of this year's work plan spans several of the existing programs and builds upon past work the RAQC has undertaken to raise awareness of air pollution in the area.

Clean Air Fleets (CAF) is one of the programs getting an educational boost in 2007. CAF is the RAQC's main diesel outreach and awareness program that includes several retrofit programs such as "Clean Yellow Fleets for Blue Skies," the RAQC's clean school bus retrofit program. As part of phase II in the "Clean Yellow Fleets for Blue Skies" program, the RAQC will begin educating fleet managers and drivers on anti-idling techniques and equipment. The program will also be expanded to include municipal and state fleets which increases the scope and the reach of the project. The education component will be combined with more retrofits for school buses and fleet vehicles including the installation of engine pre-heaters that significantly reduce idle time for diesel vehicles. The goal is to combine knowledge with technology for a greater emissions reduction benefit. Many fleet operators are unaware of the impact that diesel exhaust can have on human health. With the proper tools they can begin to greatly reduce idle time, positively affecting sensitive populations, such as school children.

The newest component of the ozone outreach and awareness program will be environmental education for middle and high school students in the Denver area. The program entitled "Clean Air Challenge" trains teachers on a specific science-based curriculum on ground-level ozone including how it is formed and different behavior changes and solutions to reduce pollution. The program is aimed at eighth through 10th graders and provides a hands-on

experience for students with models, experiments, and workbook exercises. RAQC staff will be conducting pre- and post-analyses to determine the effectiveness of the curriculum.

In addition, the RAQC will continue the multimedia component of the "Let's Take Care of Our Summer Air" ozone outreach program to raise awareness of ozone throughout the Denver-metro area. The "Chill" campaign will continue to reach out to businesses and citizens by asking individuals to "pledge to chill" to change and reduce ozone-causing behaviors.

A third program will focus on educating metro-area motorists on the importance of routine vehicle maintenance through the "Repair Your Air Campaign" (RYAC). This program identifies and repairs high-emitting vehicles and also includes efforts to assist in the planning and implementation of House Bill 06-1302. This legislation passed in 2006 and calls for increased remote sensing for clean screening of vehicles as well as the development of a mandatory high-emitter program.

The RAQC will also continue work on the Early Action Compact (EAC) for ozone, including continuing efforts on Regulations 7 and 11, focusing on oil and gas and vehicle inspection and maintenance issues, respectively. RAQC staff will also proceed with local government projects as well as transportation planning and conformity.

The RAQC looks forward to collaborating on efforts with new and existing partners on upcoming projects in the New Year.

For questions relating to the RAQC's 2007 work plan, please contact Sara O'Keefe at (303) 629-5450, ext. 220 or sokeefe@raqc.org.

Winter Pollution Program Turns 20

The State's high pollution advisory program known to most in the metro area as the "Red and Blue Program" is 20 years old this year, making it one of the longest running programs of its kind in the country.

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) has successfully managed the public advisories since the program's inception in 1987.

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Continued on Page 2...

LOCAL GOVERNMENT HIGHLIGHT

City of Thornton's fleet maintenance division won a piece of retrofit equipment at the Clean Diesel Conference, and is now taking the lead in expanding the use of the equipment to other municipal fleet vehicles throughout the region.

The unit is a tandem engine preheater plus hydraulic fluid heater that warms up the engine to proper operating temperature without actually turning on the engine. This eliminates the need for excessive idling while saving money in fuel costs. In addition, the unit helps reduce tailpipe emissions.

The City plans to install the first unit on a garbage truck, with hopes of expanding its use to other fleet vehicles.

This effort is part of the RAQC's larger "Clean Air Fleets" program which aims to retrofit about 700 municipal and state fleet vehicles with emission control equipment.

What started as a small contest award, turned into what may become a large, regional municipal effort to reduce emissions. The RAQC thanks the City of Thornton for its commitment to clean air. ■

CITY OF THORNTON

...Continued from Page 1

The outreach program uses two colors – red and blue – to give citizens a quick snapshot of winter time air quality in the metropolitan Denver region. The red advisories indicate that either current air quality is poor or conditions are expected to worsen later in the day or the next day. The red advisories also encourage citizens to limit driving and trigger mandatory residential burning restrictions. Blue advisories indicate that air quality is "good" although citizens are also encouraged to use alternative modes of transportation.

The program began in 1987 as part of the Better Air Campaign, a voluntary public/private sector initiative that grew out of efforts to address carbon monoxide pollution during the winter months.

When the program began in 1987, the eight-hour, health-based federal carbon monoxide standard of 9.0 parts per million (ppm) was exceeded in the Denver-metro area on 19 days that year. In 2005, the highest eight-hour carbon monoxide level recorded in Denver was 2.9 ppm, less than a third of the standard. Citizens have an extremely high recognition rate of the program. Recent studies show that over 90 percent of citizens in the metro-area recognize the red and blue advisories and over 80 percent say they comply with the guidelines of the advisories. The

program has been a great success in getting citizens to engage in voluntary behavior changes to reduce wintertime pollution.

The RAQC has assisted the CDPHE in distributing the red and blue advisories by sending out a daily email and fax to area municipalities and businesses during the high pollution season which runs from November 1 through March 31. The RAQC congratulates CDPHE on running such a long-term effective air quality program that has helped to greatly improve the Denver area's air over the past 20 years. ■

Diesel Conference a Success

Participation at the Rocky Mountain Clean Diesel Collaborative's (RMDCD) first Clean Diesel

Conference in early November was higher than expected and included public and private fleet owners and operators from throughout the Front Range region.

The conference focused on diesel retrofit programs and technologies while also expanding the presentations to include several other topics of interest for participants. Among the highlights of the conference were the exceptional presenters who offered great information while making each presentation enjoyable and informative. Topics ranged from the health effects of diesel, to a federal grant writing workshop, to an overview of California's diesel programs, to new diesel engine and fuel standards, and an overview of RAQC's voluntary retrofit efforts.

The networking opportunity between organizations will likely inspire new retrofit projects in the near future. Attendees were especially interested in the presentation from a doctor from National Jewish Medical and Research Center. Dr. Nathan Rabinovitch's presentation focused on the health effects from exposure to diesel exhaust which is a topic unfamiliar to many who work with diesel vehicles every day.

The conference was attended by over 100 people from both public and private organizations, operating both on- and off-road equipment. Visit www.cleanairfleets.org to view the conference presentations. ■

Upcoming Events:

December 14, 15, 17
AQCC Meeting

February 1
RAQC Board Meeting

February 25
ALA's Run the Register
W: runtheregister.com

Helpful Contacts:

RAQC:
(303) 629-5450

State's Air Pollution Control Division:
(303) 692-3100

Air Quality Hotlines:
(303) 758-4848 or
(303) 782-0211

Reminders:

High Pollution Season started November 1

When a RED Air Pollution Advisory is issued:

- follow mandatory residential burning restrictions
- limit driving by combining errands
- carpool or take public transportation
- visit the web site at: <http://apcd.state.co.us>
- call an air quality hotline operated by the State's Air Pollution Control Division for more info. (see above for numbers)

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