

Reducing air pollution won't be easy, expert says

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Watsonville will have a hard time meeting state air pollution standards, an air pollution control officer told the City Council yesterday.

"It's tough for the district and it's tough for the city," said Abra Bennett, an officer with the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District.

Watsonville is required to do its part to meet a state-mandated 30-percent decrease in air pollution in the tri-county region by 1997. Doing so not only will be complicated, but will also require significant changes in people's lives, particularly in how they travel and do business.

City Council members expressed confusion about how to implement necessary regulations — which the pollution control district hopes will be adopted by each jurisdiction by year's end.

"It is difficult information," Councilman Todd McFarren said. "I'm still confused."

Councilman Tony Campos concurred, saying, "I run a pretty profitable company, but I don't understand how this is going to work. The city's going to have a hard time doing this."

At Bennett's suggestion, the council will participate in a study session on the subject at an unspecified date.

Bennett told the council that it must have a plan to decrease solid emissions by 100 pounds per day

in the city, or regulations would be imposed by the district. Some city officials in the tri-county air basin have said they would create their own regulations, but Watsonville has not yet decided. A model ordinance written by the Indirect Source Review Consensus Group will be available in June, Bennett said.

Studies indicate that automobile exhaust is responsible for roughly one-third of emissions, Bennett said. However, there is no simple formula equating number of trips taken with emission reduction.

For example, one pound per day of emissions would be eliminated by the following, when compared with individual car trips:

- 28 carpools, defined as two persons traveling 20 miles

- two vanpools of 12 or more persons traveling 40 miles

- 26 people taking eight-mile bus trips

- 26 bicycle trips

- 29 electric-car trips of 16 miles

"You have to think in terms of pounds of emissions," Bennett said. "All trips are not the same."

Several factors complicate the issue. Mileage is not the only determination of emissions, she said, because emissions are relatively high when a vehicle is started with a cold engine, such as the first time in a day. Also, all efforts to decrease emissions would require specific documentation, and responsibility for emissions is not always clear regarding commutes into various jurisdictions, she said.

Penalties for non-compliance have not been determined.

Bennett said that the tri-county area — Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Benito counties — last year exceeded state air pollution levels four times. By comparison, the San Francisco Bay Area had 14 such incidents in 1991, and Los Angeles had 130. Effects of air pollution include various respiratory ailments as well as reductions in crop yield, she said.

Santa Cruz County must reduce emissions by 651 pounds per day, Monterey County by 1,003 per day, and San Benito County by 106 per day. Emissions from the Moss Landing Pacific Gas and Electric power plant will be reduced by 90 percent in a \$200 million project,

Bennett said.

State air pollution policies were created as a result of the 1988 California Clean Air Act, and the air pollution reduction mandate is loosely related to traffic-congestion management, though not directly related, Bennett said.

In other action last night, the City Council:

- adopted an ordinance reducing by half the lot size needed to build "granny units," to between 6,000 and 6,500 square feet.

- presented Watsonville Police Sgt. Eddie Rodriguez with the Award for Outstanding Service in Criminal Justice from the Criminal Justice Council of Santa Cruz County for his work in gang suppression and providing alternatives.