

Tough new air pollution plan approved

By DENISE FRANKLIN
Sentinel staff writer

MONTEREY — A major air-pollution control plan approved Wednesday could affect the growth of businesses, and institutions such as UC Santa Cruz.

As required by the California Clean Air Act, the plan mandates that the best available equipment be installed on existing sources to control pollution. And the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District must also make sure air quality does not suffer when new sources of emissions are built.

Dan Blunk, UCSC environmental program manager, aired the university's concerns Wednesday before the district board, which unanimously adopted the 1991 Air Quality Management Plan for the region.

The plan adds 33 new regulations to the the district's air-pollution control rules, including 25 which affect stationary sources of pollution and eight transportation-control measures.

The plan, required by the state, will affect large institutions like UCSC and the PG&E power plant in Moss Landing, as well as small businesses.

And it means, besides having to install equipment on existing pollution sources, that as the university expands, it can't create any additional pollution.

Blunk wondered how this could be done when the university has plans to grow from the current 10,000 students to 15,000 students by 2005.

Board chairman and Santa Cruz County Supervisor Gary Patton told Blunk that the university will just have to hold the line on emissions. And, even though the school has done everything it thinks it can possibly do, it still will have to do more.

Board member Barbara Shipnuck, supervisor from Monterey County, suggested the university cut down on its expected growth in emissions by reducing the number of student cars and encouraging use of mass transit.

The university currently is doing that, Blunk replied, by building faculty housing on campus and providing free bus passes to faculty.

After the hearing, Blunk said that in the region — which includes Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito counties — the university "may be the leader of the pack

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in trying to control emissions through trip-reduction plans."

For example, it recently began retrofitting campus vehicles to burn alternative fuels and is constantly encouraging students, faculty and employees to carpool, ride bikes, or use mass transit. "We definitely will leave no stone unturned and do everything practicable" to reduce emissions more."

But Blunk also reiterated the university's concerns.

"We are willing and committed to doing everything we can to mitigate air pollution by using the best available technology. But we feel we are between a rock and a hard place because we are also committed to increasing enrollment by a third between now and 2005," he said.

For example, Blunk said, when the university constructs buildings, it will also be adding boilers that emit air pollutants.

One way to achieve this "no net increase" goal is to require builders of new sources of pollution to come up with other means of reducing pollution, such as mass transit programs, to avoid a net increase in air pollution.

Regulations now need to be written, with public hearings on these regulations slated for June.

The university, Blunk said, is "seriously concerned" over how these regulations will fit in with its plans for expansion.

He added that the plan "has a ring of no-growth to it" not only for the university, but for any proposed new business that will contribute to air pollution.