
Puget Sound Clean Air Agency Diesel Fleet Facility Registration Program Stakeholder Group

Program Overview

Program Background

The Puget Sound Clean Air Agency (Agency) is a municipal corporation responsible for protecting and enhancing air quality in King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties. The Agency is seeking stakeholder input on the development of a program to register facilities that own, operate, or host fleets of diesel vehicles. Registration fees for the program would fund the operation of the Agency's Diesel Solutions program, ensuring its long-term sustainability.

The Puget Sound Clean Air Agency launched the Diesel Solutions program in 2001 as a voluntary, incentive-based program to reduce diesel emissions. Diesel particulate matter accounts for more than 70 percent of the total potential cancer risk from all monitored air toxics in the Puget Sound region. It is linked to tens of thousands of lost work and school days as well as asthma attacks, bronchitis, heart attacks, and premature death. People living and working near urban areas and transportation hubs have the highest level of exposure.

To reduce diesel emissions from mobile sources, the Agency has worked with local and national partners to build Diesel Solutions into a program that serves as a model around the country. Among other accomplishments, the Agency has helped equip 2,500 school buses with pollution control devices, along with 1,300 transit buses and municipal trucks, and more than 300 private fleet vehicles. The Agency has leveraged significant state grant funding to obtain several million dollars in federal grants and incentive funding.

State grant funding is now coming to an end, and the Agency is seeking to ensure the long-term success of Diesel Solutions by developing a sustainable source of funding to manage and operate the program.

Program Objectives and Principles

Consistent with the Washington Legislature's intent for registration of air pollution sources, the proposed facility registration program would identify, characterize, and work to reduce harmful air emissions from facilities that own, operate, or host diesel fleets. The program would help the Agency reach its goal of having facilities take steps to permanently reduce their emissions to the lowest level possible, through incentives if possible or through further regulation if necessary.

The objectives of the program are to:

- Protect public health by reducing exposure to diesel particulate matter;
- Prioritize existing facilities that create the highest exposures;
- Prioritize existing facilities that have environmental justice considerations;
- Mitigate the impacts of new facilities before they are built; and
- Recover the cost of implementing the program from the fees of the program.

To achieve these objectives, there are key program design questions that will be raised with stakeholders. These questions address which facilities should be included in the program or exempted from it, how indirect facility emissions from diesel vehicles should be measured and allocated, and how the fee structure should be designed to provide an incentive for emissions reductions.

The Agency intends to adhere to the following principles as the program is developed:

- Agency programs are transparent in their creation and implementation.
- Reducing exposure to diesel particulate matter is an agency priority and an important public health challenge.
- Helping facilities identify ways to reduce their emissions, and funding to implement them, is consistent with agency practices.
- Facilities pay fees that are related to their emissions.
- Facilities that require more effort from the agency in order to administer the program pay a proportionately higher fee.
- Both public and private facilities that own, operate or host diesel fleets are included in the program.

The agency expects to make any necessary rule changes to implement this program by September 2009.

Statutory Basis for the Program

Statutory Basis: Classification of Sources of Pollution. Section 70.94.151 of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) empowers the board to classify air contaminant sources that cause or contribute to air pollution, and to require registration and/or reporting from such classified sources. According to section (1), "Classifications ... shall be made with special reference to effects on health, economic and social factors, and physical effects on property." Diesel particulate matter emitted at or around facilities that own, operate, or host diesel vehicles represents a significant health risk to populations within the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency's jurisdiction.

Statutory Basis: Fees. According to RCW 70.94.151(2), the amount of any fee collected as part of a registration program is limited to that necessary to "compensate for the costs of administering such registration or reporting program which shall be defined as initial registration and annual or other periodic reports from the source owner providing information directly related to air pollution registration, on-site inspections necessary to verify compliance with registration requirements, data storage and retrieval systems necessary for support of the registration program, emission inventory reports and emission reduction credits computed from information provided by sources pursuant to registration program requirements, staff review, including engineering or other reliable analysis for accuracy and up-to-date information provided by sources pursuant to registration program requirements, clerical and other office support provided in direct furtherance of the registration program, and administrative support provided in directly carrying out the registration program." The amount of the proposed registration fee(s) will depend on the number of registered sources and the fee structure developed during the stakeholder and rulemaking processes.