

# California first state to force diesel trucks to clean up

■ About a million vehicles are affected by rules, which will begin taking effect in 2011

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ASSOCIATED PRESS

SACRAMENTO - California, a state plagued by smoggy skies and rising asthma rates, on Friday adopted the nation's toughest diesel emission standards for the trucks and buses that crowd its highways.

The state Air Resources Board unanimously approved the new rule despite warnings that it could cause many of California's small trucking companies to stop operating. Many of them rely on the older, dirtier vehicles targeted by the change.

The regulation comes one day after the board adopted a sweeping plan to reduce the state's greenhouse gases, which is expected to change everything from the way factories operate to the fuel Californians put in their vehicles.

Starting in 2011, the diesel rules will speed up the replacement of thousands of polluting trucks and buses that stay on the road for decades and are not as clean as newer models with tougher, federally mandated emissions standards.

More than 250 witnesses jammed the board's meeting during two days of testimony on the rule.

School children from Oakland, farm workers and physicians

from the San Joaquin Valley and representatives from environmental groups urged regulators to adopt the most sweeping diesel rule in more than a decade.

Truckers, loggers, independent dump truck and bus drivers and representatives of rural counties demanded the board delay what they called prohibitive regulations during a worsening economic recession.

Air regulators estimated the emissions standards would cost businesses, school districts and transit agencies \$5.5 billion over 16 years.

That's a cost many small and medium-sized trucking companies said they could not afford. Ron Faulkner, president of Tulare-based Faulkner Trucking, estimated it would cost him \$7 million to replace 26 of his 35 aging trucks by 2014. He said he doesn't know if he can afford it, since his company only turns a profit of \$50,000 a year.

"If this goes through, we'll probably close our doors," said Faulkner, who bought his first truck in 1988. "I've worked hard to build this to where it's at and they're going to tear it down."

Critics also questioned whether technology being developed to cut nitrogen oxides would be ready in time.

The heavy-duty trucks that cart food, electronics, toys and other goods are the leading cause of diesel pollution in a state with some of the worst pollution in the country. The new rules will reduce ozone-eating nitrogen oxides and

soot-forming particulate matter that can become embedded in lung tissue.

Nearly a million vehicles will have to be replaced or retrofitted with smog traps, filters or cleaner-burning technology beginning in 2011. By 2014, all trucks must have soot filters, and by the time the rule is fully implemented in 2023, no truck or bus in California could be older than 13 years unless it had equipment to cut nitrogen oxide emissions.

Generally, the rule applies to any vehicle larger than a double-wheel Ford F-350 pickup truck, including those that come to California from other states, Canada and Mexico.

Tractor trailers, dump trucks, street sweepers, cranes, fuel delivery trucks, school buses, motor coaches and airport shuttles all must comply. Some military, emergency and vintage vehicles would be exempt, along with private Motor homes, snow plows and those driven fewer than 1,000 miles a year. Vehicles in rural counties that meet federal air standards and some agricultural vehicles will get extra time to comply.