



ON THE AIR

Fall
2003

A Newsletter about
Clean Air. Provided
by Spokane County
Air Pollution
Control Authority
(SCAPCA)

Washington's Clean School Bus Program

Thanks to Legislature, state schools will retrofit bus fleets, reducing toxic diesel emissions by 50 percent to 90 percent.

Diesel soot is bad to breathe, especially for children whose lungs are still developing.

The Washington State legislature recognized this health issue by approving ESSB 6072, which allocates \$5 million statewide to begin installing retrofit emission controls on existing diesel school buses. There is a potential to continue this level of funding for five years, to reach approximately 5,000 of more than 9,000 school buses throughout the state.

Washington's is the largest, statewide, state-funded voluntary school bus retrofit program in the country. The first clean school buses funded by the program will roll out this December.

Buses will be fitted with oxidation catalysts or particulate filters, depending upon the age of the buses. These emission control devices, which are somewhat like catalytic converters on passenger cars, clean the exhaust before it leaves the vehicle.

Particulate filters, which can only be placed on the newest buses and require the use of ultra-low-sulfur diesel fuel, will reduce emissions of fine particles, toxic hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide by more than 90 percent. Oxidation catalysts, when combined with ultra-low-sulfur diesel fuel, reduce

emissions by 50 percent to 70 percent, depending on the pollutant measured. Oxidation catalysts used in areas of the state where ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel is not yet available will reduce fine particle emissions by 30 percent and toxic emissions by up to 50 percent. Retrofit devices cost from \$1,500 - \$8,000 per bus.

The Spokane County Air Pollution Control Authority will administer the program for school districts in the county. Some districts in the county, such as Central Valley, have already had school buses retrofitted under a program funded by Avista, which was featured in the summer issue of this newsletter.

For information about Spokane County's implementation of Washington's Clean School Bus Program, call SCAPCA at 477-4727.

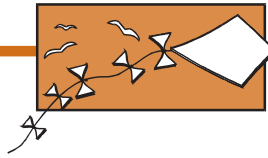
Health benefits of Reducing Diesel Exhaust

Diesel exhaust is a major source of fine particles, as well as more than 40 substances that are listed as hazardous pollutants. Because of their size, these fine particles become trapped in the small airways of the lungs when inhaled. Reducing fine particles and toxic emissions from diesel exhaust will:

- ✓ Reduce the incidence and severity of asthma attacks, chronic bronchitis, coughing, wheezing,
- ✓ Reduce hospital visits due to asthma and other respiratory ailments,
- ✓ Reduce cancer risk. Recent studies show lung cancer risk can be significantly increased by exposure to diesel exhaust.
- ✓ Reduce susceptibility to allergens. Reactions to allergens such as pollen, can be more severe when there is also exposure to diesel exhaust.

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Economic Benefits of Keeping our Air Clean

- ✍ Washington citizens save more than \$2 billion per year in health costs because the air is cleaner now than it was in 1990.
- ✍ Cleaner air provides an economic benefit to Washington’s tourism and recreation industry of at least \$49 million per year through visibility improvements.
- ✍ Washington businesses save at least \$17 million per year because cleaner air means fewer lost workdays or lost productivity due to illness caused by air pollution.
- ✍ Cleaner air helps Washington farmers by preventing more than \$11 million per year in crop damage, according to the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

Population growth and increased vehicle use continue to pose challenges to our state’s tenuous hold on clean air. It will take vigilance and the combined efforts of business, government, and citizens to sustain our air quality gains and protect the health of our citizens and the economic vitality of our state.

Source: Excerpts from WA Dept. of Ecology focus sheet, The Economic Benefits of Clean Air, September 2002.

Grass Seed Field Burning in Spokane County

by Matt Holmquist, SCAPCA Compliance Administrator

Grass seed field burning (GSFB) has long been associated with releasing potentially harmful pollutants into the air. The pollutant of greatest health concern from burning is fine particulate matter, which is harmful to the elderly, infants, and people with cardiovascular and respiratory conditions, such as asthma, emphysema, and cystic fibrosis.

Raising bluegrass for seed in Eastern Washington, Oregon, and North Idaho grew in popularity from its start in the

early 1950s. It was discovered by farmers that burning after harvest not only was an economical residue management

tool, but it also helped to produce larger amounts of seed and control weeds and disease. Thus, open field burning became the management practice of choice, and grass seed farmers in Spokane County burned between 15,000-30,000 acres annually. On a typical burn day, hundreds to thousands of acres would be burned, and if the wind shifted unexpectedly, smoke would intrude into population centers.

In the mid-1990s, more than 300 Spokane-area doctors presented a petition to the Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology), requesting an end to field burning because of the health concerns associated with fine particulate pollution. Ecology took

action on March 19, 1996, announcing a plan to reduce and ultimately phase out GSFB in the state. Ecology adopted a series of emergency rules to address the immediate situation and ultimately announced a proposed GSFB rule on March 31, 1998, that identified mechanical residue management as an alternative to burning grass seed fields. Ecology considered the alternative both practical and reasonably available but conceded that some burning could

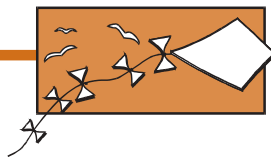
continue until alternatives were certified for all conditions.

The GSFB rules adopted by Ecology from 1996 through

1998 had a dramatic impact. Prior to 1996, there were over 100 Spokane County growers burning grass seed field residue. However, by 1999, there were only 5 growers who burned. By 2003, another benchmark was reached. For the first time in over 30 years, no GSFB occurred in Washington.

The routine smoke impacts and the hundreds of complaints SCAPCA received annually have dwindled to occasional smoke impacts from burning in Idaho. The primary air quality benefit has been the absence of smoke intrusion episodes, caused by wind shifts that would expose populations to sudden high levels of fine particles for periods of several hours to a few days.

“The routine smoke impacts and hundreds of complaints SCAPCA used to receive annually have dwindled to occasional smoke impacts from burning in Idaho.”



Car Care for Cleaner Air

by Marissa Schneider, Intern

Fall weather is here and before you know it, we'll be donning hats and gloves to brace against winter's frigid temperatures. Not only do we need to protect ourselves with proper outer wear, we need to prepare our vehicles for cold weather driving. Inclement weather, dark commute periods and icy roads can make driving a hazard. In fact, more motor vehicle collisions occur during the fall and winter months, than during the spring and summer combined.

"Cold temperatures also affect the performance of our vehicles. It takes longer for our vehicles to run at peak efficiency, meaning they emit more pollution into our air," according to Marge Chambers, SCAPCA's Public Information Specialist.

This is why the AAA Washington/Inland, the American Lung Assn. of Washington, Spokane County Air Pollution Control Authority, Washington Department of Ecology, and KXLY Radio Group are teaming up during October to promote the benefits of proper car maintenance: safer roads, cleaner air and improved fuel efficiency.

During October, public service announcements will air on KXLY News Radio 920 AM and Classy 99.9 FM. If you like trivia contests, be sure to tune in the week of October 20. Station deejays will ask a car maintenance trivia question each day, and the caller with the correct answer will win great car care prizes. Be sure to tune in!

Rideshare @ River Park Square

Thursday, October 23, 11 a.m – 7 p.m.

Call a co-worker or a friend and transport yourselves over to River Park Square for the latest and greatest on transportation choices. Exhibits, displays and demonstrations will feature the latest on clean transportation choices available in our community. From clean running cars, to alternative forms of fuel, to riding the bus or bicycling--there are many great choices you can make that will save you money, and help keep our air and water resources fresh and pure. For more information, visit www.scapca.org or call 477-4727 ext. 114.

5 Reasons Why You Should Attend!

1. Get an up-close look at cool cars that run on alternative fuels.
2. Chat with officials about Spokane's proposed Light Rail project.
3. Learn how you can get to work in a low-cost vanpool program (let someone else worry about winter driving!)
4. Enter to win prizes.
5. Get there FREE! That's right, all rides on Spokane Transit fixed routes are free on October 23.

Save Money & the Air with these tips

Here are a few ways you can keep your vehicle running at its best:

Change the oil regularly – consult your owner's manual, but it is usually best to do this every 3,000 to 4,000 miles. This will also enhance the life of your engine.

Replace dirty air filters – this will reduce air pollution in our area and will increase your vehicle's fuel efficiency.

Schedule regular tune-ups – a mechanic may be able to find other areas of concern on your vehicle before they become a problem.

Check engine fluids each time you gas up.

Inspect fan belts and hoses once a month.

Check tire pressure at least once a month – this will increase gas mileage and decrease the wear of your tires.

Avoid idling. Turn off your vehicle if you are idling for more than 30 seconds to conserve fuel and preserve the life of your engine. An idling vehicle emits 20 times the amount of pollution as a vehicle travelling 30-miles per hour.

For more car care tips, visit the following website:

www.carcarecouncil.org

◆ AIR QUALITY CALENDAR ◆

- Oct. 1: Spokane County's Oxygenated Fuel Season begins, through February 2004.
- Oct. 1: Daily wood burning status reporting begins. Before lighting a fire in your wood stove or fireplace, call the 24-hr Burning Information Line at 477-4710. For information about other wood burning rules and for clean burning tips, visit www.scapca.org or call SCAPCA at 477-4727 for a free brochure.
- Oct. 11: Is your home & yard ready for fall & winter? Visit with gardening, composting and conservation experts at the The Green Zone, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., at WSU-Spokane County Cooperative Extension Bldg, N. 222 Havana.
- Oct. 18: Fall Leaf Festival at Finch Arboretum, 3404 W. Woodland Blvd, 624-4832.
- Oct. 23: RideShare @ River Park Square -- A Clean Transportation Fair, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m. Exhibitors, displays and demonstrations on various transportation options and alternative-fueled vehicles.
- Nov. 6 & Dec. 4: SCAPCA Board of Directors meeting, 8:30 a.m., lower level, Spokane County Public Works Building, 1026 W. Broadway Ave. Meeting agendas are posted on SCAPCA's website: www.scapca.org, under "News and Events."



Reminder: No Fall Burning of Yard & Garden Debris

Because of the harmful health effects associated with burning natural vegetation, and the alternatives to burning that are available to county residents, the practice of fall burning is a thing of the past. Burning yard and garden debris (leaves, needles, tree/shrub prunings, grass clippings, and other natural yard and garden waste) is limited to eight days in the spring, and only for residents living outside Spokane County's No Burn Area **and** outside many incorporated cities, towns and their urban growth areas. These eight days occur during the first two weekends in April (Friday - Monday), unless otherwise publicized.

For more information about outdoor burning in Spokane County, including a map of the No Burn Area, and information about alternatives to burning yard and garden debris, please visit www.scapca.org/burning.html or call 477-4727 for a free copy of the *Guide to Outdoor Burning in Spokane County*.

Take Note!

On the Air is a quarterly publication of the Spokane County Air Pollution Control Authority. Its purpose is to educate local citizens on all aspects of outdoor air pollution.

Please contact Lisa Woodard, *Editor*, with comments, suggestions or story ideas:
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Burning Information:
 (509) 477-4710

Air Quality Index:
 (509) 477-2571



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- John Roskelley, Spokane County Commissioner
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