

Oakland Port OKs Plan to Ban Older Trucks; Offers Funding for Retrofits, Replacements

By Michele Fuetsch
Staff Reporter

Port of Oakland commissioners gave final approval last week to a plan to ban many older trucks on Jan. 1 and said they are confident that plenty of truckers will be able to serve the port when the ban takes effect.

Beginning next year, the port will bar entry to trucks with engine model years earlier than 1994, and to trucks with engine model years between 1994 and 2003, unless they are retrofitted with filters to cut emissions.

"I think we're all pleased that we were able to fund quite a few trucks and get them clean and really help out the truckers financially with this challenge," said port spokeswoman Marilyn Sandifur.

Matt Schrap, director of environmental affairs for the California Trucking Association, estimated the ban could prohibit entry to as many as 1,000 trucks currently hauling freight in and out of the port, which is located on the eastern side of San Francisco Bay.

"A lot of these guys just don't have equipment that currently meets the requirements, so they'd have to purchase new equipment," Schrap said.

"Conversely, many who have

applied for money [for retrofits] from the California Air Resources Board haven't got the money yet," he added.

Oakland is the nation's fifth busiest port, with about 2,000 trucks documented as frequent callers, port officials said.

The port said it has \$22 million in federal, state and local funds with which to help truckers replace or retrofit equipment. Figures provided by the port and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District indicate there is enough public money to pay for compliance for about 1,000 trucks.

"Our target is between 800 and 850 retrofits and approximately 150 truck replacements," said Tim Leong, the port environmental scientist in charge of the clean truck program.

About 750 contracts for retrofits have been signed with truckers and 500 of those agreements are fully executed, meaning the filter devices are on order or in hand, Leong said.

Port spokeswoman Sandifur said that to receive public funds to retrofit or replace trucks under Air Quality Management District rules, a truck owner must document that the truck has made at least 150 trips annually to the port.

Besides using public money, Leong said, some truck firms have replaced or retrofitted trucks on their own.

GSC Logistics, a drayage hauler located near the port, has been working with port officials and CARB and has been using some public money to get its fleet in compliance.

Its 150 trucks are almost all contracted, said Scott Taylor, GSC president and co-founder, adding that the firm hauls more than 10% of all the freight coming into the port.

"We've been very aggressive on this program, replacing [and retrofitting] our trucks throughout this year," Taylor said.

"I wouldn't want to say we're 100% compliant right now, but we are in excess of 90% and we will be 100% compliant within the next few weeks," Taylor said.

Schrap, CTA's environmental affairs director, said that until Oakland's ban takes effect, no one will know exactly how many trucks are noncompliant and thus banned from the port.

The issue is complicated by the deep recession, Schrap said, because freight is so depressed that no one knows how many haulers would be seeking entry to the port if normal tonnage levels return.