

**Minutes of the Imperial Valley/Mexicali
Air Quality Taskforce Meeting**
UABC, Campus Mexicali
Mar 05, 2009, Mexicali, Baja California

Co- Presidents : Reyes Romero, Efrain Nieblas

Attendance:

Reyes Romero, Imperial County Air Pollution Control District; **David Fege**, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, San Diego Office; **Marisol Arevalos**; Environmental Protection Agency, Baja California; **Belen Leon**, Imperial County Air Pollution Control District; **Dmitri Smith**, Air Resources Board; **Lourdes Sandoval**, Baja California Secretariat of Health; **Lourdes Meza**, UABC School of Engineering; **Nayeli Treviño**, Baja California Environmental Protection Agency; **Jose Guerrero**, Free Lance; **Veronica Gonzalez**, SEMARNAT; **Enrique Villegas**, Ecology; **Roman Calleros**, UABC; Marco Antonio Reyna , UABC; **Ramiro Barrios**, SEMARNAT; **Isabel Escobosa**, UABC; **Rebeca Corella**, Clean Air Initiative.

I. Welcome and Opening Remarks

Reyes Romero welcomed everyone and introduced himself as the Co-chair for this taskforce and commented that **Efrain Nieblas** would not be able to attend the meeting.

II. Review of Minutes from Last Meeting

Reyes Romero asked if everyone had reviewed last meetings minutes and if there were any comments or changes.

Belen Leon corrected the spelling for **Martha Harnley** as well as the location of the meeting which was held at the one stop employment agency, as well as that the ARB Update had been given by **Dimitri Smith**.

There were no other comments or corrections, Minutes were approved.

III. Presentations Q & A

**Air Quality Projects Presentation, Enrique Villegas
Ecological Police Presentation**

Jose Guerrero asked if anyone would be able to report any type of incident concerning environmental contamination to the ecology police.

Enrique Villegas answered that calling 066 would get the help needed.

Jose Guerrero also asked if 066 can also be alerted when a food vendor is emitting too many contaminants to the environment.

Enrique Villegas answered that those would be passed on to the Ecology Administration and not be attended directly. Since these establishments are a constant polluter there will be more need of support to monitor their activity. He also mentioned that for this there is already a budget approved to acquire 3 more patrol cars.

One of the taskforce members asked if cars that are emitting too much exhaust into the air would be fined.

Enrique Villegas answered that they would be, and that the fine was around 15 times the Mexican minimum wage.

It was commented that in Mexico City vehicles are impounded for polluting the air.

Enrique Villegas said that vehicles can only be impounded if they are caught unlawfully disposing of trash or waste.

Rebeca Corella asked if Mexicali was the first city to have this type of surveillance.

Enrique Villegas answered that it was the first municipality to have it.

2009 Vehicle Emissions Verification Program Presentation, Enrique Villegas

Marco Antonio Reyna asked if the idea of reaching some type of agreement with CarDealers to offer accessible credit for the governmental sectors.

Enrique Villegas answered that it has not been done but it can be considered as one of the strategies once the government vehicle fleet has been checked. He then mentioned that there will be cases where vehicles do not pass the Smog Check requirements but can be fixed and undergo a second Smog Check to obtain the 2009 Certificate, and those which would not pass the Smog Check even if they were fixed will be asked to be kept from operating.

Marco Antonio Reyna asked how often the Smog Check would have to be done.

Enrique Villegas answered that they were considering as yearly renewal.

He also mentioned that the money used to get the patrol cars and the monitoring equipment was obtained from a percentage of the federal gasoline taxes.

Dmitri Smith asked if only tail pipe emissions would be analyzed.

Enrique Villegas answered that the Mexican standard takes into consideration a variety of elements in checking vehicles, not only the tail pipe emissions, so

when a vehicle is rejected it might not be because of its emissions but for a totally unrelated issue such as a mechanical failure.

ProAire Presentation, Veronica Gonzalez & Ramiro Barrios, SEMARNAT

Reyes Romero asked if this was an updated version of the 2005 ProAire program.

Veronica Gonzalez answered that it was in fact an update, including aspects that were not part of the 2005 version.

Reyes Romero also asked regarding the comment of this being a voluntary program, since the 2005 program required many legislative changes.

Veronica Gonzalez clarified that it is considered a voluntary program because the Federal Government cannot force municipal governments to create a plan like ProAire, thus the term voluntary program; but once a city or state volunteers, then the legislative changes can be considered.

Enrique Villegas mentioned an enforcement document that Imperial Valley has to obtain Air Quality compliance.

Veronica Gonzalez added that in Mexico there is no law that can force compliance but once a ProAire has begun the commitment to enforce does go into effect like the Metropolitan Area of Mexico City which has been in effect for the past 20 years.

It was asked if emissions of heavy metals would be considered.

Veronica Gonzalez answered that the ProAire will only consider the 6 Criteria Pollutants, with a probability of adding greenhouse gases; adding that perhaps in the near future they would consider other contaminants such as heavy metal gases. She stated that the problem is that it is very difficult to create and monitor an emissions inventory for greenhouse gases.

It was mentioned that it would be important to monitor these heavy metal gases since they cause different health issues.

Veronica Gonzalez said that a measure could be included in the ProAire activities aimed at achieving that over time.

Roman Calleros commented that one of the limitations in finding solutions to environmental problems that investigators see is within Governmental Authority where bureaucracy dictates the progress of each problem. He mentioned a study that was done in 2006 regarding Cerro Prieto which CFE had sent back, this study shows the issues this area is facing in regards to contaminated air, water and land; and asked if they could pass the information to the Mexican Federal Government.

Veronica Gonzalez mentioned that she will give the contact information of a person that can help with this so this problem can be addressed.

Ramiro Barrios that this was the first meeting with the Baja California State and municipal governments; he also mentioned that one of the most important components of ProAire is Local Level Capacity Building which helps in supporting Air Quality activities at a local level. Then he said that this ProAire program will be a 10-year commitment.

Marco Antonio Reyna mentioned that he had information that can help this program and offered to participate.

Reyes Romero mentioned that everyone should support them and the program for everybody's benefit.

Pesticides in the Household; Rebeca Corella, Clean Air Initiative & Maria Isabel Escobosa, UABC.

Rebeca Corella shared that a training had been held at the Ejido Benito Juarez in the Mexicali Valley to show people how to protect themselves when using pesticides.

Roman Calleros mentioned that there was a neighborhood in Mexicali across the border from agricultural areas in the U.S. that was being impacted by agricultural burnings and pesticides, fungicides and other aerial chemicals that are applied in the US, and asked the representatives of Imperial Valley to please establish criteria to help solve these problems.

Reyes Romero commented that what **Roman Calleros** is talking about is the procedures that must be followed, and added that they already exist, such as in the case of agricultural burns; he added that whenever a burn is to take place near the border it has to be authorized by the authorities, and that pesticides are regulated for all areas.

V. Updates

Dave Fege commented on the upcoming request for project proposals which EPA has approximately a \$400,000 dls grant for projects from either side of the border. He also mentioned that a list of priority projects which need to be addressed has been made that will reduce emissions from PM10, PM2.5, NOX, Ozone, criteria pollutants and greenhouse gas pollution for better air quality, this list will be available at www.cocef.org by May 1st. All Non-Profit entities are eligible to apply for this grant such as local governments, educational institutions, NGOs, state governments, etc. Applications will be accepted for 60 days starting May 1st. All submitted projects will be reviewed by EPA, ARB, SPA, SEMARNAT & BECC to decide a final proposal and submit it by September 1st. All project proposals have a 3-page length limit. All information regarding the priorities will be sent to **Belen Leon** for distribution.

He then updated on the re-evaluation of the Baja California Air Monitoring Network; relocations are being considered due to the need to collect more accurate data, since this network has been in service for the last 10 to 12 years. The emissions inventory for the Mexicali Area is almost finished, updating information from the years 1999 and 2000, the data and inventory reflects the year 2005 same as the US side inventory for comparability reasons. The final draft will be posted at the EPA website.

Rebeca Corella mentioned that COPARMEX authorized the creation of an Environmental Care Commission, the first of its kind in any COPARMEX Chapter.

Reyes Romero gave an update for Air Quality for Imperial Valley where they are currently working on an SIP for PM10 which all the chapters are already done on a preliminary status and are posted in the APCD website, he also mentioned that for the year 2008 there were no PM10 incidents and is happy to let everyone know since it is a breakthrough due to the 2005 stricter regulations. As for the Ozone SIP which is very similar to ProAire program, where rules are being created for the reduction of Nitrogen Oxide gasses and will be complete soon. This SIP was originally planned for data from 2005 to 2007 but has been able to add data from 2008 and has fully complied with the 8hr. Ozone National Standard. Both plans will be posted during the month of April and by June it will be presented to the Board and Supervisors for approval.

Rebeca Corella congratulated them on achieving these goals.

A taskforce member mentioned that Real-Time PM10 data did not appear on the website.

Reyes Romero answered that PM10 is monitored every 6 days with filtered monitors. And he also mentioned that PM2.5 is the one that is now in non-compliance with the National Standard so this will be the next step.

Dave Fege commented that **Martha Harnley** sent her information to be distributed to everyone in attendance which **Belen Leon** will send via e-mail.

IV. Wrap-Up / Date of Next meeting.

Reyes Romero thanked everyone for attending and mentioned that the next meeting will be on May 14th 2009 in Calexico.

Session Adjourned.

