

Davis to enact Smog Check II for Bay Area

By Will Shuck, Record Capitol Bureau Chief

SACRAMENTO -- Years of delay by powerful Bay Area politicians will come to an end today when Gov. Gray Davis signs a bill that will force that region's motorists to submit their cars to the same stringent emissions inspections as their Central Valley neighbors.

Central Valley officials have long sought to end the Bay Area's exemption from California's strictest Smog Check rules, but each effort has collapsed in the Legislature, blocked by San Francisco politicians in key positions.

Davis has promised to sign the Smog Check II bill, backed by an array of Central Valley politicians and activists, during a ceremony today at the state Capitol, said Assemblyman Dennis Cardoza, D-Merced, the bill's author.

"I think it's fantastic," Cardoza said. "It's what I've worked for for six years."

The Bay Area has remained exempt from the stringent, costlier Smog Check programs in part because of political clout but also because the region enjoys comparatively cleaner air.

But Valley officials contend that while Bay Area motorists drive in a cleaner air zone, their vehicles nonetheless send tons of pollutants into the Valley every day, contributing to some of the worst air quality in the state. Bay Area officials say they're responsible for only a tiny fraction of the inland smog problem, and the Valley should look to itself for the solution.

Either way, the result should be a noticeable reduction in smog, experts say.

The measure will achieve the largest single reduction in air pollution this year, eliminating more than 10 tons of smog particles from inland air every day, said Josette Merced Bello, spokeswoman for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

"I think you should be able to notice it," she said.

But this action alone solves only a piece of the Valley's smog problem.

While Cardoza's law ultimately will keep as much as 26 tons of pollutants out of the air each day - estimates range from 10 tons to 26 tons -- the region needs to remove 150 tons a day to meet federal clean-air standards.

"We're not blaming all of our pollution problems on the Bay Area," Merced Bello said. "But we're in a situation where we can't overlook any source."

Still, the Smog Check II program dwarfs many other single reductions.

"Usually, we're happy if we get a rule passed that reduces 1 ton per day."

The region has made progress. In 1988, air in the Valley exceeded federal health guidelines 73 days. Last year the number of unhealthy smog days was 29.

Jerry Martin, spokesman for the California Air Resources Board, which will institute the program, called the measure "one that is doable and, quite frankly, overdue."

"And it benefits both areas," he said. "People in the Bay Area also will be exposed to less toxins."

A Smog Check II test costs upward of \$45, compared with \$35 for the standard test used in the Bay Area. A vehicle is about twice as likely to fail under Smog Check II and to require more-expensive repairs.

But the new law may make it easier on motorists with newer cars, potentially extending the Smog Check II exemption from cars less than 4 years old to those less than 6 years old. That will depend on whether federal regulators view that shift as a relaxation of pollution controls.

The bill also will increase the number of "gold shield" stations, where vehicles can be tested and repaired at the same place.

Most Smog Check II tests are done at test-only facilities, which are not allowed to provide repairs.

The politics of shared smog remained muddled up to the end, having shifted from Bay Area politicians killing the bills to a rumored back-room deal that finally got the measure enacted.

Critics alleged that Cardoza cut a deal with Senate President Pro Tem John Burton, D-San Francisco, to get the bill approved this year. Cardoza, it was reported, agreed to vote for a greenhouse-gas bill Burton wanted in exchange for Burton's clearing the way in the Senate for Smog Check II.

Both men have brushed aside any suggestion of illegal vote trading.

"Everyone says there was a deal," Cardoza said, "but you have to remember that this got through the Senate before. I supported the greenhouse-gas bill, and all I asked was that Burton give this a fair hearing. There was no quid pro quo."

Cardoza and others said the real help came from the Assembly Appropriations Committee. When that key panel was chaired by San Francisco Democrat Carole Migden, the measure died there. But this year the committee was controlled by Sacramento Democrat Darrell Steinberg.

"The problem in the past was Carole Migden," Cardoza said. "Darrell Steinberg was an ally on this issue."

Events in the Sacramento area

Friday September 27, 2002, 06:20:08 AM

Friday, Sept. 27

8 a.m., SACRAMENTO - California Pharmacists Association Education Foundation hosts three-day Western Pharmacy Education Faire, Sheraton Grand Hotel and Convention Center. Contact: Bill Bradley, 916-444-7811 Ex 317.

8:45 a.m., SACRAMENTO - State Treasurer Phil Angelides conducts conference call with investors to announce schedule for power supply revenue bonds. Contact: 800-946-0782.

9 a.m., SACRAMENTO - Envisioning California conference on higher education continues, Convention Center. contact: Rick Reed, 916-447-7415.

9 a.m., SACRAMENTO - Labyrinth Society gathering continues, Lions Gate Conference Center, 3410 Westover St. Contact: Gael Hancock, 702-523-3911.

9:15 or five minutes after conclusion of 8:45 conference call, SACRAMENTO - State Treasurer Phil Angelides holds media conference call to discuss power supply revenue bonds. Contact: 800-946-0715.

9:45 a.m., SACRAMENTO - William Land Elementary School holds cultural presentation featuring vaqueros, horses and flags to mark anniversary of start of Mexican war for independence, 2120 12th St. Contact: Maria Lopez, 916-264-4440.

1 p.m., SACRAMENTO - Gov. Gray Davis signs Smog Check II bill, Capitol, governor's council room. Contact: 916-445-4571.

2 p.m., SACRAMENTO - Gov. Gray Davis signs "There Oughta Be a Law" contest winners, Capitol, governor's council room. Contact: 916-445-4571.

4 p.m., SACRAMENTO - California State University holds annual engineering workshop for teachers, University Union ballroom and Hinde Auditorium. Contact: 916-278-6873.

Saturday, Sept. 28

10 a.m., SACRAMENTO - Global Family Festival and Art Exhibit, Sierra 2 Community Center, 24th Street and 4th Avenue. Contact: Kristin Faust, 916-457-4599.

Sunday, Sept. 29

2 p.m., SACRAMENTO - Ceremony to honor organ donors, Sierra Health Foundation, 1321 Garden Highway. Contact: Tracy Bryan, 916-567-1600.

Monday, Sept. 30

Noon, SACRAMENTO - Endangered Species Act critics hold rally, Capitol, south steps. Contact: 916-362-2833.

2 p.m., SACRAMENTO - Sacramento Kings hold annual media day before opening of training camp, Kings' training facility in Arco Arena parking lot. Contact: Troy Hanson, 916-286-3440.

[Letter the the editor, Fresno Bee](#)

'Gas guzzlers'

By R.X. Spence
Sanger

Currently SUVs, pickups and mini-vans are allowed to emit up to five and a half times more smog-forming pollution than cars. With all of the single passenger trucks and SUVs on the road it's no wonder our air quality is so poor.

Also it is nearly impossible for an older model, fuel-efficient car to be labeled as anything less than a gross polluter.

Once again the car companies win by forcing the public to buy new gas guzzlers and discard their older, less-polluting, small-size cars while our lungs suffer.