

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Abandoning Clean Cars Program not fair for Ariz.

by **Robert Yuhnke** - Jan. 8, 2012 06:12 PM

You must wonder why the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality has now decided to back away from the Clean Cars Program it worked so hard to adopt in 2008.

It's not because ADEQ now claims its 2009 estimates of lower pollution emitted from clean cars were wrong. The department still stands by its numbers showing pollutants that cause dangerous ozone levels in Phoenix will be less prevalent if only cleaner cars can be sold in the state. Nitrogen oxides emitted from autos will be reduced by 1,800 tons by 2020, and organic gases reduced by 1,200 tons.

And it's not because ozone is now seen as less harmful to the elderly, children and asthmatics who are most affected. In fact, the Environmental Protection Agency says that new research completed since 2009 shows ozone is more deadly than previously thought and that the air-quality standard issued in 2008 needs to be made more protective to prevent increased mortality, disease episodes and higher health-care costs.

Certainly ADEQ cannot be backing away from the Clean Cars Program because Arizona's air quality has improved. In 2011, ozone-pollution levels across the Valley deteriorated dramatically compared with 2010. Where only one monitor in central Phoenix violated the air-quality standard for ozone in 2010, 11 monitors extending from the eastern to western suburbs exceeded the standard in 2011.

More importantly, ozone levels worsened threefold from 2 parts per billion above the standard in Phoenix to 6 parts per billion in numerous communities across the Valley in 2011. Higher ozone levels contribute to more severe health impacts, and dangerous ozone levels in more communities mean more people will be hurt.

The pollution reductions expected from the Clean Cars Program come at virtually no cost to local industry or to new vehicle owners. In fact, the requirement that a small share of new vehicles sold in Arizona must be zero-emission vehicles will save the state's economy at least \$2billion from lower fuel costs between now and 2030. Electric vehicles now on the market satisfy the zero-emission requirement.

Electric vehicles use about 65cents of electricity to travel the same distance as a gasoline vehicle on a gallon of fuel costing \$3.30 or more. The lower cost of electricity will save the average electric-vehicle owner \$1,000 per year in fuel costs; help reduce Arizona's dependence on imported petroleum by powering cars with locally generated electricity; and create jobs by retaining in the local economy the \$2billion in personal wealth that will otherwise leave the state to pay for petroleum fuels. Clearly, strengthening Arizona's economy cannot be motivating ADEQ.

So how does ADEQ explain why it's dumping the program? The department says it's to reduce the costs on automakers that must sell zero-emission vehicles to meet the standards in Arizona and to avoid the administrative costs of ensuring that automakers comply. In other words, ADEQ is willing to sacrifice the health and wealth of Arizona's residents to enhance the profits of automakers in Detroit and Japan.

The Governor's Regulatory Review Council will decide on Tuesday whether abandoning the Clean Cars Program is a fair deal for Arizonans. Let them know if you think ADEQ is off-base promoting the profits of out-of-state corporations over the well-being of breathers and job seekers here in Arizona.

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