

Utah Looks to Industry for Pollution Cuts

PAUL FOY, Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — State regulators struggling to comply with federal clean-air standards said Wednesday they were likely to require major polluters to upgrade emissions controls, but that the effort may not be enough to deal with Utah's most serious episodes of air pollution.

Officials are under pressure to come up with a set of plans to clean up northern Utah's air by year's end. The regulations have been slow in coming — the Utah Air Quality Board released the first of three plans Monday for public comment. It requires vehicle emission testing for the first time ever in largely rural Cache County, anchored by the university town of Logan.

Plans for other urban areas of northern Utah remain incomplete because regulators say they haven't come up with enough ways to curb pollution. They are searching for additional measures they can adopt, and now the focus is on industry, although it produces only a small fraction of urban pollution. More than half of Utah's toxic air comes from tailpipe emissions that get trapped in mountain valleys, usually during the dead of winter.

The pollution gave scenic Salt Lake City the unfortunate distinction of having the nation's worst air for extended periods over the winter. Residents were called on to reduce driving and stop using aerosol deodorants, among other restrictions. Regulators are also endorsing a federal proposal for cleaning-burning fuel nationwide, saying that would be a big improvement in pollution problems.

The Air Quality Board gave staff scientists until no later than Oct. 1 to work up a plan for requiring new industrial emissions controls.

It could take two forms. Regulators could require major polluters to use off-the-shelf technology that's proven and readily available. Or they could require polluters to use the most advanced emissions controls, regardless of cost.

The regulators seem inclined to go with lesser technology, which is already a requirement of industries that are expanding or upgrading equipment. Under the new rules, it would become an immediate mandate for any source of 100 tons or more of emissions a year. That includes oil refineries, Hill Air Force Base and companies such as Kennecott Utah Copper Corp. and Nucor Steel.

The cost to Tesoro Refining & Marketing Co.'s Salt Lake City refinery will be in the millions of dollars, said Karma Thomson, Tesoro's top executive in Utah, who sits on the Utah Air Quality Board.

Thomson said she believed all five of Utah's oil refineries are willing to make the change if the rules are enforced evenly. The refineries are grouped on a row

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extending north of Salt Lake City, now largely surrounded by new housing development. Refining started there a century ago.

"From our industry perspective, we all have to do our share," Thomson said Wednesday.

Tesoro is upgrading its refinery to handle more waxy crude from eastern Utah and is in a position to install better emissions controls, she said.

"We operate refineries in southern California, where most of these rules apply," Thomson said. "We know how to do this."

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