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Herbert's clean air team: Move to clean fuels for cars immediately

By Amy Joi O'Donoghue, Deseret News

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FILE - This Jan. 23, 2013, file photo, shows a poor air quality sign is posted over a highway, in Salt Lake City.

Rick Bowmer, AP

Summary

Utah Gov. Gary Herbert's Clean Air Action team says the most effective way to cut down on air pollution is to make low sulfur fuel available immediately for motorists.

SALT LAKE CITY — Making low sulfur fuel immediately available for Utah motorists plus reducing wood burning during inversions will make the biggest dent in the Wasatch Front's nagging air pollution problem.

Those two key steps are among eight recommendations the Clean Air Action team appointed by Utah Gov. Gary Herbert released Wednesday in discussions with the governor, legislative leadership and the Utah Air Quality Board.

The low sulfur fuel and vehicle standards, called Tier 3, are being phased in by the Environmental Protection Agency beginning with the model year 2017 vehicle to model year 2025.

Taken together, both the changes in fuel composition


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and automotive technology will shave emissions by 70 percent on a per vehicle basis and up to 80 percent for a fleet of vehicles.

Given Utah's struggle with air quality, the governor's team said it is better not to wait on getting the fuel in motorists' vehicles, and the state should actively encourage people to get behind the wheel of vehicles with an EPA smog rating of 8 or higher.

"To encourage those who buy cars between now and 2017 to purchase cleaner cars, educational efforts are needed, as well as conversations with auto dealers. Incentives should also be considered," said a report released by Envision Utah.

Envision Utah, which was tapped by Herbert to advance policy discussions on what it would take to clean up Utah's dirty air, noted the EPA's observation that Utah stands to benefit more than any other place in the country from a transition to Tier 3 standards, with seven counties that are projected to have some of the largest 24-hour reductions in fine particulate matter, or PM2.5.

The report notes that most of the fuel sold in Utah comes from a handful of refineries in Utah and Wyoming that may be exempted from the low-sulfur standard, so the state should work with refineries to ensure that the low-sulfur fuel is sold locally.

"Working with these refineries to ensure Utahns can buy lower-sulfur fuel is critical to improving our air quality, both the short and long-term," the report said.

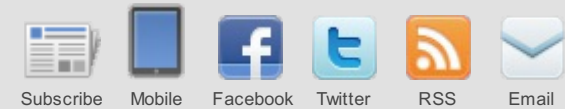
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• Reducing wood burning during inversions through increased enforcement, greater fines and streamlining the process for people to report violations.

• Reduce driving through additional investment in public transportation resources and by making biking and walking more convenient.

• Require suppliers to sell only low nitrogen oxide emitting water heaters. Although not more energy-efficient, it is estimated that building emissions would be reduced by 37 percent if the standard water heaters were eliminated from households and businesses.

• Change state law so residential Property Assessed Clean Energy loans are available to finance home energy efficiency improvements. Under the program, local governments provide loans to homeowners to make improvements. Under such loans, repayments are made via an annual assessment on property tax bills.

• Update state building codes to 2015 International Energy Conservation Code standards that would increase new home energy efficiency by close to 50 percent. Also require that a Home Energy Rating System score be included in homes for sale.

• Continue efforts to improve ozone levels in the Uinta Basin, including acceleration of the permitting process for oil and gas industry if there is agreement on adherence to stricter air quality standards.

The recommendations were met with cautious praise by clean air advocates.

"These are solid recommendations," says Matt Pacenza,



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HEAL Utah policy director. "But these policies will require a combination of political will, dollars and votes to become reality. We'll be watching closely to make sure that the Herbert administration and state Legislature show the boldness on clean air issues that the public so desperately wants."

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Binge drinking

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dave4197 Redding, CA

seems the 800 lb gorilla in the room is personal driving choices and habits. People need to change, drive less, purchase cars with cleaner exhaust. And quit burning wood in fireplaces.

the report has clear conclusions and a direction [More..](#)

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The funny thing is that 30 years ago when things were much worse nobody cared. Now things are a lot better yet the environmentalists act like we have a 1980's LA type pollution problem.

Things are getting better, but pushing [More..](#)

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Thats what I thought South Jordan, UT

Why does he not try to limit development of new housing? Utah has space, but do we are running out of clean air and water. Until we can figure out how to manage water and air, let's stop putting in Daybreaks. If we don't have the roads, [More..](#)

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About the Author



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Amy Joi O'Donoghue is the environmental reporter the Deseret News, specializing in coverage of issues that affect land, air, water and energy development. She has worked here since 1998 and has been an assistant city [more ..](#)

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