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AQMD seeks stories of pollution as part of push for tougher rules

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Hoping to put a human face on its push for tough new smog standards, the region's air-pollution agency on Wednesday asked the public for personal stories about dirty air.

The request comes as a strict new plan is expected to be adopted next month.

"We're hoping these stories shine a light on cleaning the air and meeting the (air quality) standards out there," said Tina Cherry, a spokeswoman for the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

Dubbed the "Voices in the Community" program, the public can make submissions, including photos and videos, to yourstory@aqmd.gov.

The testimonials will be used in newsletters, videos and public-service announcements. The region continues to have the dirtiest air in the nation.

The campaign will also be used to pressure agencies with broader authority than the AQMD to impose tougher requirements on vehicles, ships, trains, boats and airplanes.

The California Air Resources Board and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have authority over those mobile sources, while the AQMD has authority mainly over stationary businesses, ranging from refineries to dry cleaners.

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every year in California due to fine particle pollution alone, according to estimates by the state Air Resources Board.

Dozens of new control measures are included in the AQMD's air quality management plan, which is up for adoption May 4.

"They will take heat because they're asking for more reductions. Business won't like that," said Tim Carmichael, president of the Coalition for Clean Air.

The three-year plan is designed to get the region on its way toward