



News Release

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Consumer, Environmental, and Public Health Organizations Call for Tough Standards for Local Power Generators

Citing strong evidence that the proliferation of diesel fueled local power generators undermines public health, advocates across the state today launched a campaign to promote strong state regulation of these home- and business-based energy sources.

“Over the next month the California Air Resources Board (CARB) will be finalizing proposed standards for controlling emissions and pollution from small local power generation units,” said Kevin Finney, Climate Change Director for the Coalition for Clean Air. “We are working with ten other organizations to make sure those standards protect public health.”

California is experiencing strong growth in the number of small power generation units located near the point of use – known as Distributed Generation (or “DG”) – as homeowners, businesses, and industry look for an alternative or supplement to the statewide power grid.

Currently the overwhelming majority of distributed generation units are powered by diesel fuel, which is 131 times more polluting than combined cycle gas power plants. The CARB standards will encourage the transition from polluting local power to cleaner technologies such as solar, wind, natural gas microturbines and fuel cells.

“According to the California Air Resources Board, living near a single one-megawatt diesel generator increases lifetime cancer risk by 50%,” said Matthew Marguillies, M.D., a retired pulmonologist with Physicians for Social Responsibility. “This is completely consistent with what we know about diesel emissions, which are extremely high in

particulate matter – the tiny cancer-causing particles that lodge deep inside your lung tissue,” continued Marguillies.

“These local power systems operate in our neighborhoods, at construction sites, fairs, and public events, so we must support the development of cleaner and safer alternatives to protect the people close to the generators,” said Martin Schlageter, Conservation Coordinator for the Sierra Club, Angeles Chapter.

“If an energy user wants to use an advanced, cleaner technology like microturbines, or a non-polluting option like solar or wind, we can all applaud. However, the reality is, too many Californians resort to the dirtiest power sources you can find on the market, dirty diesel generators. It is time for the state to step in,” said Sujatha Jahagirdar from CalPIRG.

The Good, the Bad and the Other: Public Health and the Future of Distributed Generation urges the state to ensure that distributed generation is as clean, or cleaner, than the cleanest central power plant technology. It also recommends that the state set rules and incentives to promote the cleanest energy and enact simple regulations so manufacturers can anticipate changes and comply with new technology requirements.

The report was released today in the five California Air Quality Management Districts with the largest numbers of existing back-up generators – South Coast, San Diego County, Sacramento Metropolitan, San Joaquin Valley Unified, and Bay Area. The report was researched and prepared by the Coalition for Clean Air and the California Public Interest Research Group (CALPIRG). In addition to releasing the report, the campaign will distribute an action alert on the future of distributed generation to more than 100,000 people who are part of the organizations in the coalition.

The environmental leaders made their comments at California State University Northridge, the first CSU campus to employ a combined heat and power project. University officials installed six 30-kilowatt microturbines, made by SFV-based Capstone Turbine Corporation, which use jet engine technology to provide a consistent, clean and cost-effective energy source. Unlike diesel generators, gas-fired microturbines can be operated 24 hours a day, seven days a week with the approval of the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

“We here at CSUN want to use technology that ensures a reliable, affordable energy source for the university, while protecting air quality and public health in the community,” said Tom Brown, CSUN Executive Director of Facilities Management. “Not only are these microturbines very low in emissions, but we have increased their energy efficiency by recovering and reusing the waste heat they generate for hot-water heating on our campus.”

The South Coast Air Quality Management District's Governing Board provided funding for the purchase and installation of the six Capstone turbines at Cal State Northridge, as well as more than 80 additional microturbines at schools, universities and other public facilities throughout the Los Angeles basin. The microturbines were funded by air pollution settlements last year with Southland power plant operators.

"These microturbines will produce electricity during times of peak power demand, thereby helping Southern California meet its electricity needs," said Barry Wallerstein, SCAQMD's executive officer, in a written statement. "These units also show the long-term promise of clean, distributed power generation and will reduce the need for dirty diesel generators."

The effort to clean up pollution from diesel generators and support the expansion of clean distributed generation is supported by other members of the *California Clean Distributed Generation Campaign Group* including: American Lung Association of California, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Natural Resources Defense Council, Center for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Technologies, Sierra Club, Environmental Defense, Planning and Conservation League, Center for Environmental Research and Technology, and Latino Issues Forum.