



Employer Options for Improving Tennessee Air Quality

Reducing mobile source emissions (diesel trucks and buses, construction equipment, SUVs, minivans and cars) is essential to reduce unhealthy levels of air pollution in Tennessee communities. As an employer, you can help protect the quality of life in your community by taking voluntary steps to reduce air pollution.

There are a number of actions that each employer can take that will help.

- ❖ Communicate regularly with your employees about air pollution and the things they can do to help reduce air emissions.
- ❖ Encourage employees to use transportation alternatives by offering them federally financed monetary incentives (e.g., Commuter Choice benefits) or helping them form carpools and vanpools.
- ❖ Reduce air pollution by using cleaner fuels in your vehicle fleet and actively participating in regional "Air Quality Action Day" programs.

The sections below describe these different actions in greater detail.

Initiate an ongoing trip reduction program for your employees

Trip reduction programs offer effective ways to reduce vehicle emissions by reducing the number of vehicle trips and number of miles we travel. Trip reduction programs encourage and enable employees to use transportation alternatives, including transit, vanpools, carpools, walking, biking, telework and others. Your organization's trip reduction program could include:

- ❖ Hold a Transportation Fair for employees to educate them about available commuting alternatives in your community
- ❖ Establish an employee rideshare program
 - ◆ Provide rideshare applications
 - ◆ Provide employees with marketing materials about your rideshare program
 - ◆ Provide preferential parking for vanpools and carpools
 - ◆ Offer a guaranteed ride home for participating employees
- ❖ Offer alternatives for employees not to drive to lunch (e.g., set up an employee kitchen, snack shop or cafeteria)
- ❖ Implement a flextime policy and/or establish alternative work schedules
 - ◆ Allow employees to arrive and depart at off-peak hours
 - ◆ Adopt a compressed work week program (e.g., four 10-hour days each week or eight 9-hour days and one 8-hour day every two weeks)
- ❖ Initiate a company telework program
 - ◆ Develop and implement a policy to allow employees to work from home or from a centrally located telework center
 - ◆ Use teleconferencing, video conferencing and email instead of driving whenever possible

Provide Commuter Choice benefits to your employees

The federal government offers employers the options of providing their employees with financial benefits to help them pay for transportation expenses. The employer's federal tax liability is reduced in order to pay for these benefits. As an employer, you can choose to provide your employees with Commuter Choice benefits. These benefits range from providing non-taxable transit passes obtained from the local transit agency to pre-tax benefits that allow employees to withhold transit or vanpool expenses from their paycheck before taxes. For more information:

- ◆ **www.CommuterChoice.gov/** *Best Workplaces for CommutersSM* is supported through a partnership between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).
- ◆ **www.CommuterChoice.com/** This website is maintained by the Association for Commuter Transportation and is supported in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Participate in “Air Quality Action Day” programs

Communities across Tennessee are now developing programs to alert citizens when unhealthy air quality is predicted for the following day. Through local communication networks, employers and the public are asked to take steps the next day to limit air pollution emissions. With broad community support, Air Quality Action Days can help avoid peak pollution levels and reduce public exposure to unhealthy levels of ozone and fine particles.

- ❖ Get involved with the Air Quality Action Day program in your region
- ❖ Publicize Air Quality Action Day alerts to your employees and other organizations that work closely with yours
- ❖ Educate employees about personal actions they can take to reduce pollution on Air Quality Action Days (e.g., take transit, vanpool or carpool to work, postpone mowing and painting, postpone unnecessary vehicle trips, avoid idling, refuel vehicles after 7:00 p.m., and conserve energy at home and in the workplace)

To prepare for Air Quality Action Days, your organization should also develop an air quality action plan for your operations. This plan will set out procedures and actions that will be implemented on alert days. Some of the actions that your organization may take are listed in the following section.

Reduce emissions in your operations and maintenance activities

Employers can help reduce air pollution by carrying out the organization's activities in ways that reduce air emissions. Some of these opportunities to reduce emissions and save energy are listed below. An asterisk indicates actions that should be taken on Air Quality Action Days; other activities may be appropriate for the entire year.

- ❖ **Gasoline or diesel-powered engines**
 - ◆ Delay use of lawn maintenance equipment*
 - ◆ Reduce the frequency of mowing and explore landscaping alternatives that require less mowing
 - ◆ Switch to electric lawn maintenance equipment
 - ◆ Delay use of off-road construction equipment*
 - ◆ Delay or reduce use of small motors or portable generators*
 - ◆ Perform pre-season and regular tune-ups for lawn care equipment

- ❖ **Painting and Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) emitting activities**
 - ◆ Delay or reduce painting with high VOC-content paints*
 - ◆ Use hand rollers and paint brushes instead of sprayers*
 - ◆ Shift from oil-based to water-based paints
 - ◆ Reduce or delay use of VOC-emitting solvents and cleaners*
 - ◆ Switch to chemicals with lower VOC content
- ❖ **Fleet vehicles**
 - ◆ Delay refueling until after 7:00 p.m. or refuel on non-alert days*
 - ◆ Postpone vehicle use*
 - ◆ Use cleaner fuels in fleet vehicles
 - ◆ Purchase cleaner vehicles for fleet
 - ◆ Develop an anti-idling policy for your vehicles and communicate the policy to employees

Adopt energy efficiency and energy conservation practices

- ❖ Implement policies for employees to reduce energy consumption at work (e.g., turn off computer monitors when they leave work)
- ❖ Conduct energy audits of buildings and install identified energy-saving upgrades
 - ◆ Improve efficiency of existing HVAC systems
 - ◆ Reset thermostats to 78 degrees*

For ideas and resources, visit the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ENERGY STAR® web site at www.energystar.gov/

Reduce emissions from your vehicle fleet

Employers also have the choice of taking steps to reduce emissions from their vehicle fleet. There are several ways to do this.

- ❖ **Purchase cleaner vehicles, install emission reduction equipment on existing diesel engines, and use cleaner fuels in your organization's vehicles.** In response to EPA regulations, new vehicles in the next few years will be significantly cleaner than today. Purchase of these newer, more efficient gasoline and diesel-powered vehicles will help lower emissions. Employers also may purchase vehicles based on new technologies such as hybrid electric systems, and those designed to burn cleaner fuels such as natural gas, propane or ethanol.
- ❖ **Use alternative fuels.** Natural gas, propane, ethanol and biodiesel are generally cleaner than gasoline and diesel, and some of these fuels have other environmental advantages. Increased use of these fuels can also help the nation reduce its dependence on imported oil. Fleet use of alternative fuels can thus help improve air quality and increase national security.
- ❖ **Reduce emissions from existing diesel engines by installing emission reduction equipment.** Diesel retrofit equipment will reduce emissions significantly, but some types of retrofits require the use of ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel.

- ❖ **Purchase ultra low sulfur diesel fuel.** The use of ultra-low sulfur fuel in diesel retrofit engines reduces NOx and particulate emissions up to 90 percent. Even with regular diesel engines, ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel will reduce particulate emissions. Both ultra-low sulfur diesel and biodiesel can be used in existing diesel engines without modification.

For additional information on alternative fuels and your vehicle fleet, contact the East Tennessee Clean Fuels Coalition at www.etcfc.org and Clean Cities of Middle Tennessee at www.TennesseeCleanFuels.org.



www.cleanairtn.org

June 2004