

### **Fleet environmental improvements and upcoming event**

By David Goldstein, PWA, IWMD

Auto fleet managers crave small improvements in efficiency because, multiplied by the number of cars in a fleet, these changes can make a big difference. Sometimes, these changes can also provide significant benefits for the environment.

In recent years, the fleet managed by the County of Ventura's General Services Agency has made several of these improvements for both efficiency and the environment. This includes using water-based, non-solvent cleaners for auto parts; using retreaded tires on rear axles for trucks and trailers; washing shop rags for reuse; and adding hybrids and electric cars to the fleet.

One change anticipated to be small ended up being enormous. According to Chris Melton, Deputy Director of Fleet Services, reducing idling time on fleet vehicles has saved \$160,000 per year in fuel costs.

Educating drivers of fleet vehicles about the economic cost of idling an engine probably had some effect. Appealing to environmental sensitivity may have further reduced idling. After all, according to Melton, an hour of engine idling can burn a gallon of gas, and the low engine RPM and low oil pressure of idling does not create enough heat initially to burn soot out of the car's emission system waste stream, preventing cars' pollution control equipment from working as designed. The air fouled first is the air immediately surrounding the person idling the car.

However, the biggest reduction in idling occurred when the General Services Agency installed Global Positioning System telematics in cars. These devices provided data about idling cars, and this information was linked to databases showing which department had the cars at the time of idling. Following a round of courteously phrased but direct emails to the departments detailing the cost savings and environmental benefit of reduced idling times, idling declined tremendously.

California law makes idling illegal in some situations. Diesel vehicles over 10,000 pounds can be ticketed for idling longer than five minutes, failing to shut down an engine immediately upon arrival at a school, or failing to leave within 30 seconds of starting an engine at a school. If you see a vehicle, even a school bus, violate this rule, you can report it to the Ventura County Air Pollution Control Division at 1-800-559-SMOG.

Many hybrid cars automatically shut down engines during extended stops and then rapidly restart when the accelerator is pushed, but electric powered engines are the only way to entirely avoid the air emissions of idling while stuck in traffic, stopped at red lights, or while queuing in a steadily moving line of cars.

Next Sunday, September 9, you can test drive electric cars at the National Drive Electric Week Roundup at the Channel Islands Harbor's West Channel Park. Over 35 cars will be on display, and five auto dealers are bringing cars for test drives.