

San Diego secures \$28.5 M in air-quality funding to green up construction equipment, freight trucks and more



A zero-emission, electric-charged semi-truck on display at Marine Group Boat Works in Chula Vista on Monday, July 17. The California Air Resources Board just allocated \$28.5 million to the San Diego region for grant programs encouraging the use of such equipment.

(Arash Afshar/Port of San Diego)

An effort to improve air quality largely focused on the San Diego region's most polluted and disadvantaged communities just received a \$28.5 million boost.

Elected officials announced on Wednesday the infusion of state funding that will offer grants to schools, government agencies and businesses that swap out polluting vehicles and machinery for more fuel efficient or electric models.

The funding — provided through the California Air Resources Board's cap-and-trade program — comes in tandem with a [historic, statewide effort to identifying and address pollution sources in disadvantaged communities](#), such as Barrio Logan and National City.

Officials said that projects located in these neighborhoods will receive priority under the region's competitive grant process.

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"We must raise awareness about the negative impacts of climate change," San Diego County Supervisor Nathan Fletcher, who also serves on the air board, said at a press event Wednesday. "We must raise awareness about air-quality issues that we face in San Diego County, but we must also provide resources and take action."

Eligible projects include purchasing cleaner than required construction and farming equipment, as well as fishing boats, cargo-handling machinery and [freight trucks](#).

K-12 schools can also apply for to the program to help fund new low-emission equipment, such as lawnmowers, air filtration systems and electric buses. Highly-polluting stationary equipment is also eligible.

"Together all these efforts are going to make a huge difference," Supervisor Greg Cox said at the event. "People who live in Barrio Logan and National City and San Ysidro have much higher rates of asthma than people in other parts of my district have, so we need these additional tools."

Businesses, nonprofits and government agencies can apply through the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District online at <https://publicservices.sdcounty.ca.gov/citizenaccess/>.

New equipment should not be purchased until grant approval is granted. The air district will start evaluating applications this fall and select winners as early as winter.

The air board has targeted 10 communities around the state to be part of the broader air monitoring and cleanup effort, such as Richmond in the Bay Area and East Los Angeles.

About \$19 million of the new funds are specifically allocated to address air pollution in San Diego's portside communities of Barrio Logan, Logan Heights, Sherman Heights and National City.

"We're grateful for the air pollution control district for securing those funds that are intended to be used to reduce diesel emissions in the portside communities," said Diane Takvorian, executive director of the San Diego-based Environmental Health Coalition and member of the air board.

Activists in the San Diego region and waterfront businesses have long argued over the sources of air pollution. While community members and their advocates have pointed to the shipbuilding and freight industries at the Port of San Diego, those businesses have argued that freeway pollution from cars is the primary driver of air pollution.

Regional air district officials have said that initial results from the monitoring will be available to the public as soon as next month.