



air pollution control district
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

Agenda Item: I-1
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Continued Item: No

Board Agenda Item

TO: Air Pollution Control District Board

FROM: Aeron Arlin Genet, Air Pollution Control Officer 

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SUBJECT: Update on the Clean Air Rooms Pilot Program

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file an update on the 2021 Clean Air Rooms Pilot Program, including program recap and the plan to purchase a limited number of additional air purifiers to fulfill a waiting list.

BACKGROUND:

At your June 17 meeting, the Board authorized the District to implement the Clean Air Rooms Pilot Program to provide High-Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) purifiers to residents of the communities of Guadalupe and Casmalia, on a first-come, first-served basis, with proof of address. HEPA purifiers are a great tool to keep indoor air clean during wildfires and other air pollution incidents. The goal of this program was to provide more individuals with the ability to keep their indoor air safe and clean during wildfire smoke events, and to give the devices to residents in traditionally underserved areas, many of whom work outdoors. The District implemented two very successful distribution events for this program on Sunday, September 26 and Thursday, September 30 at the Dunes Center in Guadalupe.

DISCUSSION:

Following the Board's approval in June, the District worked to review bids from air purifier vendors and determine which prospective vendor's device would both meet our required device specifications and also make the best use of limited public funds. Ultimately, the District selected a device from manufacturer Winix and was able to purchase 656 units with the \$100,000 budget authorized by your Board for this pilot program.

Aeron Arlin Genet, Air Pollution Control Officer

The District was fortunate to partner with many community members, nonprofit organizations and government agencies to promote this event. The Guadalupe Dunes Center and neighboring Guadalupe Cultural Arts & Education Center were valued partners in promoting the event. They were also integral in helping us execute the program, generously offering to store the devices leading up to the distribution days and hosting the event. In addition, the help of the Talaugon family was critical in carrying out the event logistics and providing hands-on support during the distribution days.

Leading up to the September 26 and September 30 distribution days, the District worked with the City of Guadalupe, the Guadalupe Union School District, the Promotores Network (who provided English, Spanish, and Mixteco outreach), Los Amigos de Guadalupe, and others to let community members know about the upcoming event and what would be required to participate. Outreach tools, provided in English and Spanish, used to promote this event included: multiple social media posts across Twitter, Instagram, and Guadalupe and Casmalia neighborhoods on Nextdoor; 1,400 flyers distributed through the schools; signage on the theater marquee in Guadalupe; and flyers distributed electronically to multiple stakeholders as well as in person by partners at various community events.

Both distribution days, on September 26 and September 30, were incredibly popular and well-attended. All 656 devices were claimed between the two days. Along with receiving one air purifier per household, program participants also received a District tote bag containing the following bilingual materials: our infographic series about “clean air rooms,” guidance on what specs to look for when purchasing an air purifier, how to find information on our website and social media accounts, and refrigerator magnets explaining the Air Quality Index and levels at which an air purifier should be used. Also, as part of the distribution days, the Promotores Network worked at a booth to answer any questions in Spanish and Mixteco, and to show attendees how to create a do-it-yourself version of an air purifier using a box fan and an air filter. In the coming months, the District will work further with the Promotores Network on surveying program participants about their experience with the program and with using the devices.

The District was excited to see the popularity of the program among Guadalupe and Casmalia residents. However, not everyone who showed up to the distribution days was able to receive a device, due to the demand and the limited number of devices available as part of this pilot program. In the event that more funding became available, a waiting list was created with names of approximately 140 people who attended the events but were not able to receive a device.

After the distribution events, the District determined that additional funds could be allocated in our existing operating budget to purchase air purifiers for those individuals on the waiting list. This additional, one-time expenditure for this pilot program will not exceed \$20,000. The District will purchase the same device or a very similar one directly from the same vendor.

The next component of this project is to raise awareness countywide about the benefits of HEPA purifiers. A key component will involve sharing animated versions of our “clean air rooms” infographic series, with voiceover in English, Spanish, and Mixteco. The District will also share information regarding how to interpret air quality data, especially during wildfire smoke events, and when it is recommended to use the air purifier.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The District spent \$100,000 for the initial component of this pilot program, as approved by the Board in June. A portion of the funding came from the District's Clean Air Fund, while the remaining portion came from the District's operational reserves fund balance. The District's Clean Air Fund was established by your Board on March 21, 2019 with Resolution 19-03. In the resolution, excess Notice of Violation revenues are allocated to Clean Air Fund projects undertaken by the District and/or third parties that provide air quality and human health benefits to the Santa Barbara County community.

The costs to make the program whole by distributing air purifiers to all residents on the waiting list will be paid for with funds in the FY 2021-22 budget. The additional cost to the District will be \$20,000. These funds will come from the unforeseen savings the District will accomplish due to the second lease amendment included for your Board's approval today (i.e., reduction in rent expense, utilities, and repairs and maintenance). The travel and training budget will also be reduced to help absorb the additional costs for the program. Administrative costs for implementing this program are included in the FY 2021-22 budget. There are no additional impacts.