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News Release
November 12, 2008

Vehicle Emission Program Keeps 33,000 Tons of Pollution Out of the Air

Program uses emissions regulation to reduce and prevent air pollution

(Salt Lake County) – Since its inception in 1984, the Salt Lake Valley Health Department’s (SLVHD) motor vehicle emission inspection and maintenance (I/M) program has helped keep 33,000 tons of pollution out of the Salt Lake Valley every year.

“The number one cause of county air pollution – roughly 65% - comes from mobile sources such as cars and trucks,” says Jim Brande, Air Pollution Control bureau manager. “The SLVHD I/M program has been instrumental in keeping thousands of tons of pollution out of the air and, most importantly, out of our lungs where it can do the most damage.”

Most vehicles emit a variety of potentially harmful pollutants when in use, including nitrogen oxides. Once emitted, these pollutants interact with the atmosphere to form ozone and particulate matter (PM), which cause the visible inversions and poor air quality warnings seen in both winter and summer months. Diesel vehicles, which are regulated separately from gasoline vehicles, directly emit coarse PM into the atmosphere.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, ozone and PM have been shown to reduce lung function, inflame and damage lung tissue, irritate the respiratory system, increase susceptibility to respiratory infections, aggravate asthma and other lung diseases and put those with heart disease at an elevated risk of hospitalization and death.

The County regulates both gas and diesel vehicles operating in Salt Lake County by requiring either annual or biennial emission inspections. Last year over 600,000 vehicles were inspected at the 330 independent I/M testing stations across the county. Inspection stations are closely regulated by SLVHD’s Air Pollution Control Bureau with monthly inspections and site visits.

“Improperly functioning vehicles are a health risk because they emit large amounts of pollutants,” explains Brande, “In fact, one visibly smoking vehicle creates as much pollution as up to 30 properly functioning cars.” The public is encouraged to report smoking vehicles through the Smoking Vehicle Hotline at (801) 944-7664 or online at www.slvhealth.org.

For more information on the I/M program, call (801) 313-6720 or visit the SLVHD website. A complete list of I/M inspection locations in Salt Lake County is available at www.slvhealth.org/cfm/imstn.cfm.

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