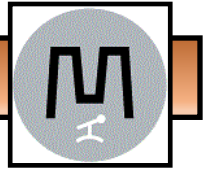


City Council Message



December 2020



Diane Turner

Air quality has long been a concern for Salt Lake County residents. As we head into the winter months the cloud of air pollution around us increases substantially reaching unhealthy levels for many people – causing warnings to stay indoors and avoid vehicle travel.

Although beautiful and inviting for many year-round sports, the Wasatch Mountains on the east and the Oquirrah Mountains on the west create a bowl where warm air acts as a lid trapping cold air below and producing our winter inversions. Just as the cold air is trapped, so is the pollution, requiring a storm, which allows it to escape. Every day during an inversion the pollution level doubles. As residents, we have the opportunity to affect these challenges by making smart choices.

Carbon dioxide emissions are emitted from many sources including residential, commercial, industrial and transportation sectors.

In our homes we can reduce emissions by becoming more energy efficient. Several easy steps include, reducing our thermostats to 68 degrees, changing furnace filters regularly, and replacing light sources with LED. Wood stoves emit small particles that get into your lungs and blood stream and cause a number of health issues, such as heart attacks, asthma and other respiratory problems. Natural gas fireplaces eliminate those health concerns and, therefore, lower emissions. Consider Energy Star appliances like water heaters and furnaces, which will help you conserve and save money while reducing nitrogen oxide emissions that contribute to the small particulate matter in our air. Use of battery powered yard tools also makes a difference.

In Utah, vehicle exhaust accounts for up to 50% of our air pollution. Each gallon of fuel used emits about 20 pounds of carbon dioxide. The unnecessary idling of cars, trucks, and buses increases air pollution wasting both fuel and money. On cold days instead of letting your engine run for several minutes, manufacturers recommend waiting no more than 30 seconds to drive off. The Murray City Council approved an anti-idling ordinance in 2016 restricting idling to no more than 2 minutes, except when stopped for a traffic signal or when the temperature is below 32 degrees or above 90 degrees. Studies show that restarting your vehicle will not wear out the starter.

Look for Tier 3 gas for newer vehicles, which contains less sulfur and reduces emissions by up to 80%. Even older vehicles may benefit from an emission savings of up to 12%. In 2017 Utah refineries were given a sales tax exemption to incentivize production of Tier 3 fuel and it is widely available as of the first of this year.

Using more energy efficient vehicles like hybrid and plug-in electric models have significant emission benefits. Additionally, Murray City Power is installing electric charging stations in several locations, including the parking lot near the Murray Park Center and the new Fire Station #81 on 4800 South and Box Elder Street. Charging stations will also be installed at the new city center.

It starts with us! We can all make a difference! Remember to limit and combine your vehicle trips, carpool, use public transportation, walk, and bike to improve our environment, save money and promote good health.

Diane Turner

District 4