



## NEWS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release**  
June 14, 2006

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### **Metro Chamber President Challenges Region's Businesses to Spare The Air**

Matt Mahood, President & CEO of the Sacramento Metro Chamber, today challenges the region's businesses to actively support the 2006 Spare The Air season.

Every year, summer smog reaches unhealthy levels and Spare The Air advisories must be issued to inform and protect the public. Air quality is of critical importance to the business community and to everyone who lives and works in the Sacramento region.

"Clean air is good business," says Matt Mahood, Metro Chamber President & CEO. "With more than 61,000 businesses in our region, the business community—and specifically, employers—play a vital role in the effort to improve air quality. Together, we can improve air quality through the business decisions we make and by encouraging our employees to take steps toward reducing auto emissions, especially on Spare The Air days."

The Metro Chamber will continue to serve as a communication channel to its member businesses. When the weather heats up and air quality worsens, the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District (AQMD) issues Spare The Air advisories. The Metro Chamber will then send an electronic reminder to member businesses the day before, urging them to conduct their business in a manner that reduces automobile emissions. The Metro Chamber's reminder will offer activities and suggestions (see below) on how to minimize vehicle trips.

The Metro Chamber will also help its employees reduce vehicle trips by reimbursing for light rail/bus passes on days when Spare The Air advisories have been issued.

"We want to set an example for business and nonprofit organizations like ourselves," Mahood said. "It's not hard to do the right thing."

Mahood challenges the region's employers to support the Spare The Air program, join the Employer Network, sign up for Air Alert notifications and make a public commitment to improving the air we breathe.

Representing the business community, Maggie Townsley, Jones & Stokes' Principal Director of Local Government & Transportation, showcases how a mid-sized company's efforts can improve air quality. "We provide bikes for employee errands, bike racks, showers and lockers, a formal telework policy, transit reimbursement on Spare The Air days, a future fleet of hybrid vehicles, and notification to employees when air quality is unhealthy so they can protect themselves and their families," said Townsley.

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## **Spare The Air Challenge**

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“Summer brings air pollution that can rise to unhealthy levels. As a public health agency, we are dedicated to working with our business community to improve air quality for the citizens of the region,” said Larry Greene, Executive Director of the Sacramento Metropolitan AQMD, which coordinates the Spare The Air program on behalf of the air districts in the region.

The Spare The Air campaign offers simple steps that we can all do to improve air quality in the Sacramento region. These include:

- Reduce driving
- Carpool
- Bike or walk
- Use transportation alternatives such as buses and light rail
- Telework
- Reduce use of gas-powered tools and recreational equipment

The aim of the Spare The Air campaign is to encourage the public to take responsibility for reducing the amount of ground-level ozone pollution during the summer smog season. Mobile source emissions caused by cars, trucks, motorcycles, construction equipment and agricultural equipment produce approximately 70% of our air pollution problem. Motorists are encouraged to reduce driving when a Spare The Air advisory is issued.

Here are more tips for how to help reduce air pollution:

- Make fewer trips. Your car emits far more pollution in the first few minutes of operation before emission controls have warmed up and reached peak efficiency.
- Postpone errands on a Spare The Air day.
- Take your lunch to work and avoid a mid-day trip.
- Drive smoothly – this will save fuel and lower emissions.
- Use public transit or share a ride with a friend.
- Give your car regular tune-ups so the engine will pollute less.
- Change your car’s fuel filter and air filter at least once a year.
- Don’t top off your tank when you refuel.
- Refuel your car after dark when temperatures are cooler and evaporative emissions can’t react with sunlight to form ozone.
- Make sure your tires are properly inflated – properly inflated tires will reduce your car’s emissions by saving fuel.

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## TIP SHEET

### Things A Business Can Do to Spare The Air

The following suggestions are what a business can do when Spare The Air alerts are issued.

#### **Receive AirAlert notifications**

Encourage employees to sign up for free AirAlert notifications of Spare The Air days on their home e-mail or via digital text messaging (cell phone or pager). Sign up at [SpareTheAir.com](http://SpareTheAir.com)

#### **Appoint a Spare The Air Coordinator**

Designate someone in the office to be the company's "Spare The Air Coordinator." Have that person sign up for AirAlert and distribute Spare The Air advisories to employees when they are received via AirAlert or the Sacramento Metro Chamber. Some of the ways companies distribute advisories are via e-mail; signage in the employee's break room and public lobby; over the PA system; and via group voicemail announcements.

#### **Distribute promotional items**

A company's Spare The Air Coordinator can contact the AQMD Spare The Air program coordinator at 916-874-4812 to receive free worksite promotional items to encourage employees to Spare The Air.

#### **Link to SpareTheAir.com**

Put a link to [SpareTheAir.com](http://SpareTheAir.com) on a company's home page or Intranet so clients or employees can view the day's air quality forecast.

#### **Support tele-working**

Offer a "tele-work" (work-at-home) option on Spare The Air days to employees who could perform their tasks away from the office. Supervisors will be surprised at the productivity and employee satisfaction this promotes.

#### **Buy lunch on Spare The Air days**

The best employers constantly look for ways to motivate and retain good employees. If a business has just a few employees, consider buying them pizza or sandwiches for lunch on a Spare The Air day. That could help your employees save a lot of lunchtime driving trips that contribute to air pollution.

#### **Or, do a bulk lunch order**

On a Spare The Air day, the office can phone in a lunch order for everyone, then send just one person to pick up the food. Or, order from a place that delivers.

#### **Try transit**

If a business is conveniently located near light rail or a bus stop, encourage employees to try transit to the office or from the office to meetings that might be located near transit lines and reimburse them for the cost of the ticket. The transit system can provide routes and schedules for employees.

#### **Provide a transit pass to employees**

Purchasing or discounting monthly transit passes for employees provides a solid employee benefit and demonstrates your commitment to improving the region's air quality.



### **Help employees get around**

If a business is located in an urban area in which employees frequently head out on brief local business errands to nearby destinations, purchase a bicycle, electric bicycle, or gyro-stabilized transporter (like the Segway) for them to use for these short trips instead of a motor vehicle.

### **Support ridesharing at your company**

Offer support “from the top” to your employees to match them up with other employees whose work schedules and home location might make them natural carpool partners. A business can also promote SACOG Rideshare’s carpool matching service at: [www.Sacregion511.org](http://www.Sacregion511.org).

### **Join a Transportation Management Association (TMA)**

Many areas of the region are served by TMAs—transportation management associations. These organizations help the employees of member companies find convenient, air-pollution-reducing ways to commute.

### **Purchase low-emission vehicles for the company**

Whenever a business needs to replace a vehicle, whether it’s a delivery truck or a fleet car, buy the vehicle with the lowest possible emissions in its class. Find out which vehicles pollute the least on the California Air Resources Board’s “Drive Clean” Web site at [www.driveclean.ca.gov](http://www.driveclean.ca.gov). Find out if any incentive funds are available to help replace delivery truck’s engine with a new low-emission engine by contacting the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District’s Mobile Source Division at 916-874-4800.

### **Become designated a Best Workplace for Commuters**

Don’t let the businesses efforts go unrecognized. Find out how your business can be honored as a “Best Workplace for Commuters” by visiting [www.commuterchoice.gov](http://www.commuterchoice.gov).

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