

Vista Irrigation District (Brett Hodgkiss)

Attached are Vista Irrigation District's comments on the proposed amendments to the Advanced Clean Fleet regulations.

Regards,

Brett Hodgkiss
General Manager



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September 11, 2025

Clerk of the Board
California Air Resources Board
1001 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

To the members of the California Air Resources Board:

Re: Comments on Proposed Amendments to the Advanced Clean Fleets Regulation

The Vista Irrigation District (District), a retail water agency that provides water service to roughly 133,000 people in the city of Vista, and portions of San Marcos, Escondido, Oceanside and unincorporated areas of San Diego County, appreciates the opportunity to provide comments to the proposed amendments to the Advanced Clean Fleets (ACF) regulatory language. The District is responsible for operating a 429 mile water distribution system, ensuring facility security, emergency preparedness, maintaining and managing fleet (vehicles and heavy equipment) and various other assets as well as managing dam and reservoir operations, safeguarding water quality and implementing a proactive pipeline replacement program among other functions. A reliable fleet is critical to the District's ability to meet its mission of providing a reliable and safe water supply to its customers.

The ACF sets ambitious compliance deadlines for fleets to transition to an increasing proportion of Zero Emission Vehicles (ZEVs). ACF's ZEV transition requires access to adequate utility infrastructure for alternative fueling such as Electric Vehicle (EV) charging as well as access to ZEVs that operationally can deliver the full spectrum of important and highly specialized services that fleets provide.

Earlier this year, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) withdrew its request for a federal Clean Air Act waiver for the ACF regulation, which would have been required for the rule to apply to the state's high-priority and drayage fleets. As a result of this withdrawal, CARB is exclusively enforcing the ACF regulations on state and local fleets. Additionally, President Trump signed three Congressional Review Act resolutions to terminate the waivers for Advanced Clean Trucks, Advanced Clean Cars II, and Heavy-Duty Omnibus. As a result of these and other unanticipated events, the ZEV manufacturing and sales marketplace will be unquestionably disrupted beyond any level that could have been anticipated when the regulation was approved in April 2023.

Due to the inherent challenges to compliance and questions regarding the stability of the industry, the District respectfully requests that CARB consider expanding the scope of amendments to the ACF to help facilitate compliance with the regulations.

On the 45-day draft proposal generally:

The District is generally supportive of, and encouraged by, the direction that CARB is taking with proposed amendments and respectfully requests continued further dialogue with stakeholders, and further amendments to reshape the regulations with an eye towards achieving broad compliance while also recognizing the challenges the District faces and ensuring the essential service that the District provides is not interrupted.

Waivers and Extensions

With mounting challenges and a disrupted ZEV marketplace, the District respectfully requests CARB remove ZEV purchase requirements in order to be eligible to request any waivers or extensions. This necessary change will help the District avert costly acquisitions of ZEVs before it is possible to install the infrastructure required to use them or procure the right vehicles at the right time to meet the needs of its constituents and provide emergency response and mutual aid.

Examples include:

- *Infrastructure Delay:* The requirement to show a purchase agreement for a vehicle that cannot be fueled or charged due to an infrastructure delay to apply for the infrastructure delay exemption should be removed. The infrastructure needs to be in place before the vehicles can be purchased. Additionally, the requirement to show documentation of an executed contract for the ZEV fueling infrastructure installation including a construction permit indicating the permit issuance date is at least one year prior to the next applicable compliance deadline should be revisited as it can put the District on an unreasonable timeline to benefit from the exemption.
- *Mutual Aid:* Current regulations for mutual aid internal combustion engines (ICE) vehicles owners may only initially apply for the exemption after the first 25% of the fleet are ZEVs and caps the number of ICE vehicles in the fleet per this exemption. This requirement in the exemption should be removed as the District will still be required to respond to emergency situations no matter what percentage of its fleet is comprised of ZEV's.

An emergency vehicle is always an emergency vehicle no matter how much of the fleet is comprised of ZEV.

Mutual Aid, Declared Emergencies and Emergency Vehicles

In addition to updating the mutual aid exemptions as noted above, the District respectfully requests CARB to update and expand the emergency vehicle exemption, *to exclude from the regulations*, those vehicles that respond to and support critical operations related to emergencies and disasters, often under austere conditions, to continue to protect our community. The District's front-line workers and the communities they serve rely on vehicles that must be able to do the job the emergency dictates, even when the power is out.

Not all emergencies are declared or are outside of the District's jurisdiction or benefit from mutual aid.

Given the rising toll of natural disasters in California, we must prioritize the safety of our communities and the public servants that work around the clock through these unprecedented events. In addition to emergency vehicles currently defined in the California Vehicle Code, and given the most likely current or future ZEV options will depend upon a consistently accessible source of electricity, the risk of disruption whether due to an earthquake, public safety power shutoff, rolling brownout, wildfire, flood, or other natural disaster is too great to risk the operability of these vehicles and health and safety of Californians.

Purchase Exemptions and Procurement

The District respectfully requests that CARB re-evaluate the ZEV exemptions related to purchase to more accurately reflect the actual needs of special districts and actual availability of ZEVs analogous in performance to ICE vehicles. True availability of vehicles should be evaluated with criteria reflecting the history and solvency of the manufacturer(s), warranty, related parts and service availability. Furthermore, vehicles, including heavy equipment, need to be available in sufficient quantities from multiple reputable vehicle manufacturers to provide for a competitive bidding environment and to acquire the correct vehicles in a timely manner. The District also submits that the performance characteristics of the vehicles are paramount and must consider such things as ability to perform at different temperatures and elevations, payload, towing capacity, safety rating standards and operations while on a grade when towing or hauling.

The District provides vital services which span across a 33-square mile service area; it is proud to highlight that it has already pursued environmentally sound and robust strategies (solar projects) to be part of the solution to our state's climate goals. However, the existing framework has challenges that need to be addressed, and the District looks forward to partnering with CARB and other stakeholders to address those challenges.

Thank you for your consideration of the District's written response to the proposed ACF's draft amendments.

Sincerely,



Brett Hodgkiss
General Manager

cc: California Special Districts Association

