

Otay Water District (Tenille Otero)

I am including the attached comment letter on behalf of the Otay Water District. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Tenille Otero
Communications Officer
Otay Water District



...Dedicated to Community Service

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California Air Resources Board

1001 I Street

Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Comments on Proposed Amendments to the Advanced Clean Fleets (ACF) Regulation – State & Local Government Fleets (AB 1594)

Dear Chair and Members of the Board:

The Otay Water District (OWD) appreciates the California Air Resources Board's (CARB) ongoing engagement with public agencies as you consider amendments to the ACF regulation and Assembly Bill 1594 (Garcia, 2023). OWD shares the State's air quality and climate objectives and is advancing near-term electrification where feasible. OWD currently operates two battery-electric cargo vans and plans to procure four additional zero-emission vehicles this year. However, beginning in calendar year 2027, when the rule requires all covered replacements to be zero-emission, our agency will face significant operational and procurement challenges. Of our 92-vehicle fleet, 43 units are within ACF scope, and many support time-critical water and wastewater operations and emergency response.

OWD is respectfully submitting the comments below. In brief, OWD requests: (1) a clear, durable exemption for vehicles used in mutual aid and emergency response regardless of prior Zero Emissions Vehicle (ZEV) acquisitions; (2) earlier and more practical access to exemptions and extensions where safety-critical service would otherwise be compromised; (3) adjustments to the Daily Usage and ZEV Purchase exemptions so real-world operations and market availability are determinative; and (4) refinement of the "traditional utility-specialized vehicle" construct to reflect service network and technician availability for complex ZEV drivetrains.

1) Mutual Aid and Emergency Response Exemption

Water and wastewater agencies must respond immediately to wildfires, earthquakes, main breaks, Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) events, and other emergencies. Many of OWD's Class 4–8 vehicles power vacuum, Vactor, crane, or generator equipment are dispatched on mutual aid or other emergencies without advance notice. We urge CARB to provide a standing exemption for vehicles designated for mutual aid and/or emergency operations—without conditioning eligibility on fleet-wide ZEV share thresholds or excluding common workhorses (e.g., pickups and vans). Where ZEVs cannot be refueled rapidly in the field or supported by mobile charging/hydrogen providers, public safety should prevail. Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) purchases under a granted emergency exemption should be treated as compliant for their full-service life.

2) Daily Usage Exemption – align with real operations

The Daily Usage Exemption, as drafted, requires proof that a highest-energy Battery-electric vehicle (BEV) could not meet demonstrated daily usage, imposes fixed kWh-per-mile factors, and requires at least 10% of the fleet to already be ZEV/NZEV. For smaller agencies and emergency-heavy assignments, these conditions can be unworkable. We recommend: (a) allowing eligibility without a minimum ZEV share when vehicles are designated for emergency or mutual aid, (b) allowing on-the-ground telemetry and duty-cycle data to supersede generic conversion factors, and (c) allowing multiyear (e.g., 60 months) lookbacks for units with infrequent but extreme peaks.

3) Infrastructure Readiness and the 13-Year Gate

OWD is completing facility charging upgrades, including utility interconnection improvements, but utility timelines extend beyond 2027. We support an infrastructure delay pathway that ties compliance directly to documented utility schedules. Additionally, exemptions and extensions tied to a vehicle reaching 13 years of age should be available earlier for public-safety-critical assets when infrastructure or technology is not yet ready or when the vehicle is no longer cost-effective to maintain. Linking relief to usage thresholds, emergency designation, or documented grid delays would better protect essential service continuity.

4) Non-Repairable Vehicles — Replacement Pathway

When an in-scope vehicle is declared non-repairable (e.g., catastrophic drivetrain failure, frame damage, or repair costs exceeding residual value) and a suitable used ICE replacement of the same configuration cannot be sourced or does not meet the agency's operational criteria (safety features, mileage/condition thresholds, duty cycle suitability, emissions compliance, and compatibility with existing upfits), CARB should allow the purchase of a new ICE vehicle of the same configuration under a streamlined exemption. This pathway should:

- Be available irrespective of the fleet's existing ZEV share when the unit supports public safety or emergency response.
- Deem the replacement compliant for its normal service life without requiring the 13-year age threshold; and
- Preserve parity of configuration (Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR) class, body type, PTO/upfit capability) to ensure continuity of essential service.

5) “Traditional Utility-Specialized Vehicle” Add Serviceability Criteria

We appreciate CARB's effort to recognize the unique demands of utility-specialized equipment. To ensure uptime, OWD recommends expanding the definition/early-access framework to account for service network maturity. Specifically, eligibility should consider whether manufacturers and authorized dealers provide sufficient regional parts availability, warranty support, and technicians trained for high-voltage powertrains and power-take-off (PTO) systems. Without these, public agencies risk prolonged downtime for mission-critical units.

6) Hybrid / Near-Zero Bridge for Mission-Critical Roles

Where fully zero-emission platforms cannot yet satisfy payload, PTO, range, or rapid-refuel needs, OWD supports a defined bridge, allowing purchase of CARB-certified hybrid near-zero or, if not available, traditional ICE vehicles for specific mission-critical assignments, with sunsetting aligned to infrastructure readiness and market availability milestones.

7) Procurement Lead Times and Market Availability

Even where suitable ZEVs exist, statewide demand and vocational upfitting lead times extend deliveries well beyond one year. OWD requests that exemption windows and order-to-delivery timelines be aligned with realistic procurement cycles, so agencies are not deemed out of compliance due to factors outside of their control.

Thank you for considering these recommendations. OWD remains committed to practical, durable decarbonization while safeguarding public health and safety. We welcome the opportunity to discuss our fleet plan, duty cycles, and infrastructure schedule with staff and board members.

If you have any questions or would like to schedule a meeting , please don't hesitate to contact me at (619) 670-2231 or cmederos@otaywater.gov. We look forward to working with CARB to craft amendments that safeguard essential public-health services while advancing California's zero-emission future. Thank you for your time and attention regarding this issue.

Respectfully submitted,



Charles Mederos
Utility Services Manager
Otay Water District

cc: Andrew Jackson, Chief of Water Operations, Otay Water District
Jose Martinez, General Manager, Otay Water District