

10 Governor lifts air pollution moratorium

AQMD to begin issuing permits after January 1
Source: SCAQMD

Hundreds of Southland businesses and public utilities forced to delay plans to expand, modernize or relocate can move forward after Jan. 1, 2010 now that Gov. Schwarzenegger has signed a bill lifting an air quality permit moratorium.

The governor recently signed Senate Bill 827, which authorizes the South Coast Air Quality Management District to begin issuing more than 1,200 air pollution permit applications frozen by a state court decision in November 2008.

"Tens of thousands of jobs and more than \$5 billion in investment were foregone as a result of the court decision," said AQMD Chairman William Burke, Ed.D. "The governor's approval now helps jump-start our ailing economy while protecting our air quality."

AQMD will begin issuing the first permits blocked by the moratorium soon after Jan. 1.

SB 827, first introduced as SB 696, allows AQMD to resume issuing at no charge emission "offsets" to small- to medium-sized businesses and public service facilities.

Specifically, AQMD can resume issuing offsets to businesses that emit less than four tons per year of smog-forming emissions, as well as public service facilities such as police and fire stations, schools, hospitals, landfills and sewage treatment plants. Businesses affected by the permit moratorium include gas stations, tortilla chip makers, automobile recyclers, grocery stores and many others.

SB 827 serves as a stopgap measure, temporarily lifting the permit moratorium while allowing AQMD time to complete rulemaking on its emission offset program pursuant to the state court decision. The legislation will expire on May 1, 2012.

Small businesses and public facilities have been unable to obtain offsets, also known as emission reduction credits, due to a lawsuit filed in August 2007 by the NRDC and other environmental groups.

The state judge's final order in this case required AQMD to set aside two of the agency's regulations governing its emissions offset program on California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) grounds. The judge made the decision even though CEQA compliance would otherwise occur at the individual project approval phase. That in turn put a halt to issuing new permits for facilities that needed emissions offsets from AQMD. The state court ruling also potentially revoked over 3,000 permits issued since September 2006 that relied on offsets from the AQMD.

Whenever a new or modified facility increases its emissions in Southern California, it is required to provide emissions offsets to prevent air quality in an already polluted area from further deteriorating. Offsets are generated when a facility or air pollution-emitting equipment is permanently shut down, or when an active plant controls its emissions to a greater degree than required by air quality regulations.

AQMD is the air pollution control agency for Orange County and major portions of Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

For more information about the South Coast Air Quality Management District visit www.aqmd.gov.



Julius Kazan
Spa Resort Casino

Spa Resort Casino Named Presenting Sponsor of Palm Springs Wild WestFest and Frank M. Bogert Memorial Rodeo

A new partnership between the Palm Springs Wild WestFest and Spa Resort Casino marks a significant endorsement of the event taking place in Palm Springs this spring. The event, now formally known as the Palm Springs Wild WestFest presented by Spa Resort Casino, is scheduled for March 12 - 14, 2010 at Caballeros Field adjacent to the Convention Center in downtown Palm Springs.

Julius Kazan, Director of Operations for Spa Resort Casino, announced the presenting sponsorship at a news conference November 9 at Palm Springs City Hall. "We are extremely excited about WestFest," Kazan said, "not only because it's great for the city, but because Spa Resort Casino has such a historical connection to the magic of downtown Palm Springs."

Spa Resort Casino is located right in the heart of downtown and features a 24/7 casino with slots, a

variety of table games, live poker and high-limit gaming set at a luxurious resort which includes five superb restaurants and a world-famous spa. It is owned and operated by the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, which also owns and operates the Four Diamond Agua Caliente Casino Resort Spa in Rancho Mirage, the Indian Canyons, Agua Caliente Cultural Museum and Indian Canyons Golf Resort.

CEO Christopher Burkhardt of Spur of the Moment, LLC, which is bringing the event to Palm Springs at its own expense, welcomed their involvement. "We are bringing a top-notch professional rodeo to the region, and partnering with Spa Resort Casino adds a top-notch organization to the mix. Everything we do is aimed at satisfying the public, from our entertainment to our food to our local relationships. Spa Resort Casino is the absolute best in those areas. We welcome their participation."

The combination of Western lifestyle, music, sports, arts and culture will rock Palm Springs and the entire Coachella Valley on an annual basis. The WestFest is free to the public, and the rodeo is reasonably priced to guarantee maximum fun for the whole family. Portions of the proceeds from WestFest will go to a variety of charitable organizations in the area.

With partners like Spa Resort Casino and American Cowboy Magazine, the event will showcase Palm Springs and its business community, the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto National Monument and the historic epicenter of the City of Palm Springs. The late Mayor Frank Bogert's vision of a resort town that hosts Hollywood celebrities, heads of state and cowboys of all ages will continue in perpetuity.

For more information on the Palm Springs Wild WestFest presented by Spa Resort Casino or to buy tickets to the rodeo, please visit www.palmspringswestfest.com. For more information on Spa Resort Casino, please visit www.sparesortcasino.com. Special promotions will be available at Spa Resort during the event.



City Beat

Tree Lighting & Festivities...The City of Palm Springs will celebrate the holiday season with a spectacular Christmas tree lighting for City employees and Coachella Valley residents Tuesday, December 1 in front of City Hall – featuring traditional carols performed by the Palm Springs High School Choir, free cookies and hot chocolate from Savoury's Catering, free carriage rides from Palm Springs Carriages – and a visit from Santa. Caroling will kick off on the steps of City Hall, 3200 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way, beginning at 5:15 p.m.

New Fire Engines and CNG Patrol Car...The City celebrated the addition of two new Pierce Quantum fire engines and a new CNG (compressed natural gas) police car to its public safety fleet.

The new CNG patrol car comes equipped with state-of-the-art crime fighting technology, according to Police Chief David Dominguez.

The new vehicle is equipped with four automated license plate reading cameras to assist in finding

- stolen cars and people whose licenses have been suspended as a result of a DUI conviction.
- "We're the only police department in Riverside County currently testing a black and white CNG patrol car," said Dominguez – who noted that the new vehicle gets 100 miles more per gas gallon equivalent of gasoline.
- Dominguez said he hopes his department's use of the progressive new vehicle will "serve notice to other communities that crime can be fought with the environment in mind."
- The City's new fire engines, stationed at the Racquet Club Estates and Laverne stations, will also help improve how firefighters attack fires in Palm Springs, according to Fire Chief Blake Goetz.
- "These two engines will help us fight fires with the latest technology – including revolutionary foam systems, an easier to use color-coded pump control panel, and more built-in safety components for firefighters and the public, Goetz said.