

More

Community forum deals with lack of quality air

LOCAL NEWS

By Megan Baydones

MORE SAN PEDRO

Councilwoman Janice Hahn hosted an educational Air Quality Forum at the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium on Aug. 12.

"We are suffering and people are dying because of what's in our air," the councilwoman said.

"Cargo-related pollution in 2005 accounted for 750 premature deaths, 290 hospitalizations, 18,000 asthma attacks and 1.1 million days of restricted activity."

Representatives from the California Air Resources Board, the public advocacy group Coalition for Clean Air, and the Long Beach Alliance for Children with Asthma spoke to a crowd of

about 80 people.

Elina Green, who spoke about increased numbers of children with asthma in polluted areas, repeated what has been said many times: Diesel fumes from ships as well as cargo-carrying trucks causes asthma and asthma attacks.

While asthma is considered hereditary, more new cases of the respiratory disease occur in places of high pollution, like San Pedro, she said.

Braving a few audience shouts of, "Too long!" Dale Shimp, a California Air Resources Board manager, said he would like to reduce air emissions to the 2001 level within five years.

He also talked about new ways to measure pollution in

the area by providing electric vehicles with air monitoring equipment and driving them around the city.

However, audience member Kathlene Woodfield commented that following behind trucks billowing diesel fumes and carbon monoxide with an electric vehicle wouldn't do anything to clean up the air today.

Believing that "business should pay their fair share," Rafael Pizarro, a Coalition for Clean Air campaign associate, recommended a \$30 charge to each shipper to help pay for clean-up solutions.

"Make the polluter pay," Pizarro said. "We're not asking a poor industry to pay their fair share — [the ports] are booming

and are expected to triple their business within 10 years."

Two pollution solutions that got positive reviews from the audience were electrifying ship operations while in port as well as demanding shippers fuel up with low-sulfur diesel.

"I'm a practical kind of gal and it seems practical that if these low-sulfur fuels are available right now, it should be our No. 1 priority to push for," said audience member Sarah Mantz. "And there's no need for them to keep those engines throbbing when we could plug them in."

Caroline Meddan, who took notes throughout the presentation, agreed.

"I'm going to write to Ralph Appel environmental affairs

director for the Port of Los Angeles] that even though it costs a little more, this low-sulfur fuel should be used for the ships," she said.

Though many were appreciative of the updates, saying they hadn't realized how bad the situation was, others said they would like more action.

"For the most part it was a rehashing over old information and I don't fault people for doing that because the presentations were designed for the community," said David Bee-man of the Central San Pedro Neighborhood Council. "But to a certain degree I would have liked to have heard more proactive statements from the agencies," he said.