

**REVISED MOTION BY SUPERVISORS KATHRYN
BARGER AND JANICE HAHN**

June 14, 2022

Opportunities and Incentives for Emissions-Free Leaf Blowers

Los Angeles County is a leader in environmental protection and cultivating safe and healthy communities. For years, many states and counties, including Los Angeles County, have analyzed the impact from vehicles and machinery that emit greenhouse gasses, including lawn tools and leaf blowers. In the fall of 2021, the California legislature passed Assembly Bill 1346 which implemented the following regulations on gas-powered lawn tools and similar devices:

1. Requires the Air Resources Board (ARB) to adopt cost-effective and technologically feasible regulations to prohibit engine exhaust and evaporative emissions from new "small off-road engines" (SORE), to apply to engines produced on or after January 1, 2024, or as soon as ARB determines is feasible, whichever is later.
2. Requires ARB to identify, and, to the extent feasible, make available, funding for commercial rebates or similar incentive funding as part of any updates to existing, applicable funding program guidelines for air districts to implement to support the transition to zero-emission SORE operation.

This legislation is in line with the County’s efforts to limit the environmental impact of machinery in our communities. Many cities, including some in Los Angeles County, have gone a step further to outright ban the use of gas-powered lawn tools including leaf blowers. This is in response to the public health, environmental and noise impacts caused by such tools. The state legislation references that “gas-powered commercial leaf blower for one hour emits air pollutants comparable to driving a 2017 Toyota Camry from Los Angeles to Denver”. Not only do these air pollutants impact public health, but they are most concentrated in the breathing zones of workers. Additionally, gas powered leaf blowers produce up to 90 decibels of noise, while electric models can produce fewer than 60 decibels.

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In pursuing these and other similar environmental causes, it is imperative that the County identify ways where we can support and encourage businesses to participate in this effort. Given that many of the impacted businesses from this legislation are small independent contractors, the County must ensure that grant and rebate opportunities are made available to all operators.

Small businesses recognize the environmental and public benefits of switching to electric alternatives, but the burden to replace their existing gas-powered tools is financially challenging. Furthermore, the transition to battery-powered leaf blowers requires that these independent contractors have the means to install infrastructure to regularly charge and re-charge equipment at their place of business or residence and to find charging technology that allows them to charge while on the job. Recognizing the significant barriers to adoption, the South Coast Air Quality Management District (South Coast AQMD) has introduced a rebate for members of the public who purchase electric lawn equipment, and an incentive program for commercial landscapers and gardeners to receive up to 75% off their purchase of such equipment. While this rebate will be critical, the County should explore opportunities to fill the gap to fully offset the costs of replacing equipment.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Sustainability Officer, in consultation with the Department of Economic Opportunity, Consumer and Business Affairs, Departments of Public Health, and Public Works, and the Office of Immigrant Affairs, report back in writing in 120 days on:

1. The feasibility of banning the operation of gas-powered leaf blowers in unincorporated County, including outreach to businesses and community stakeholders and a potential phased approach or pilot program; this should include an analysis of the potential grant, rebate and buy-back opportunities available to mitigate the financial impact for the transition to electric and battery charged leaf blowers, as well as a summary of multi-lingual education and outreach strategies necessary to ensure that all members of the landscaping industry, including those without a business license, have access to incentive programs and possible funding streams for this program.
2. The environmental, public health, and business impact of AB 1346 and the statewide ban of sale of "small off-road engines" by 2024.

WE, FURTHER MOVE to direct the CEO, in consultation with the Internal Services Department, the Department of Public Works, Parks and Recreation and other impacted departments, to report back in writing in 120 days on the feasibility of and impact to County operations and contracted services to ban the use of gas-powered lawn tools and transition to fully electric alternatives

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