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## Raley's takes clean-exhaust diesels for a spin

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If you find yourself downwind of a Raley's grocery truck with a shiny chrome exhaust stack, feel free to breathe, local pollution regulators say.

It's the whiff of the future, a not-too-distant day when California trucks and buses will be required to puff smokelessly and mostly non-toxic.

Raley's, the region's No. 1 grocery seller, has been testing an experimental diesel exhaust cleansing system on its newer-model big rigs for the past five months, thanks to a \$500,000 grant from the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District.

The test vehicles can be identified by "clean air machine" decals on the cab doors and exhaust stack that poke above the cab roofs, compared with other Raley's trucks equipped with tailpipes.

Results from the first 1,000 hours hauling groceries on Northern California and Nevada roads have impressed air district officials, who constantly look for new ways to cut emissions of smog-forming nitrous oxides, or NOx.

"We've seen greater than 80 percent reductions in NOx emissions," said Kristian Damkier, an air district engineer, referring to 2004 model, 400-horsepower engines.

"That's greater than any other technology we have demonstrated or supported in Sacramento."

Raley's officials said the multi-staged pollution device has not affected engine performance, even on trans-Sierra hauls to stores in Reno and Winnemucca, Nev. The family-owned chain sees cleaner trucks as part of its long-standing campaign of satisfying customers' environmental concerns, from farm to fork.

"We are proud to be the first retailer in California to employ this new filter system and operate the cleanest-burning truck fleet in the world," said Bill Coyne, Raley's president and CEO of Raley's Family of Fine Stores.

Patented by its manufacturer, Johnson Matthey of Malvern, Pa., as "Selective Catalytic Reduction Technology," the system is undergoing verification by the California Air Resources Board, which regulates vehicle emissions.

Johnson Matthey has about 50 demonstration vehicles now running in California, the Southwest and Texas. Los Angeles Department of Water and Power vehicles, Arco gasoline tankers, Ralph's grocery store haulers in Southern California, and various municipal transit buses and garbage trucks are involved, according to Marty Lassen, the company's marketing director.

The vehicles are equipped with pollution readers that electronically relay results for the air board's review, he said.

Reductions in NOx emissions are averaging 84 percent, compared with pre-retrofit levels, Lassen said.

The state's seal of verification would allow Johnson Matthey to sell the product as retrofit device for meeting

more stringent diesel emission standards that California proposes to phase in, beginning Dec. 31, 2010.

"This will literally give a new lease on life to many older trucks that are capable of providing ongoing service" but cannot otherwise meet the new proposed California emission standards for heavy-duty trucks and buses, Lassen said.

A new big-rig, "class 8" engine and cab that can haul at least 33,000 pounds cost \$110,000 to \$125,000, he said.

By comparison, the Sacramento air district is paying \$25,000 each to buy and install the system on 20 Raley's trucks to reap "the early clean-air benefits," said Christina Ragsdale, district spokeswoman.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has adopted stricter soot and NOx limits on new diesel engines nationwide, beginning in 2007.

California is the only state that has proposed tighter emission standards for existing trucks and buses, requiring them to burn as clean as 2007 models.

The nation's smoggiest state, California can't afford to wait for tens of thousands of older, dirtier diesel engines to wear out, said Erik White, who heads the air board's efforts to clean up vehicles already on the road.

"We need to look at both retrofitting and replacing older trucks with newer, cleaner ones," White said.

"In many cases we are talking about replacing trucks that are in good working order with many years of life left that just aren't clean enough." White said Johnson Matthey is one of about six companies that have approached the state board with various retrofit devices to clean up diesel emissions, but the first manufacturer to claim reductions in NOx beyond emissions levels required for the latest diesel engines.

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