

# Local

## SANTA BARBARA COUNTY NEWS

## Emissions checkpoint deals fines to truckers

By CAMERON YOUNG  
NEWS-PRESS CORRESPONDENT

Hundreds of trucks, big and small, were pulled over Tuesday for inspection at four checkpoints in and around Santa Maria.

Many drivers had to pay fines for violating air quality regulations — from \$300 minimum to upwards of \$1,000 for significant violations.

A “strike force” from the California Air Resources Board is cracking down on violators of California’s clean air regulations through Thursday, and Santa Maria was not a randomly selected location.

Bruce Tuter, manager for compliance and outreach for the board, said the board wants to check refrigeration units in this area as well as engines for excessive emissions.

Since diesel exhaust is linked with cancer, the board is particularly interested in making sure heavy-duty trucks are fitted with the appropriate diesel particulate filter.

Trucks without the filters can be cited \$1,000 for each month not in compliance, up to 16 months in some cases.

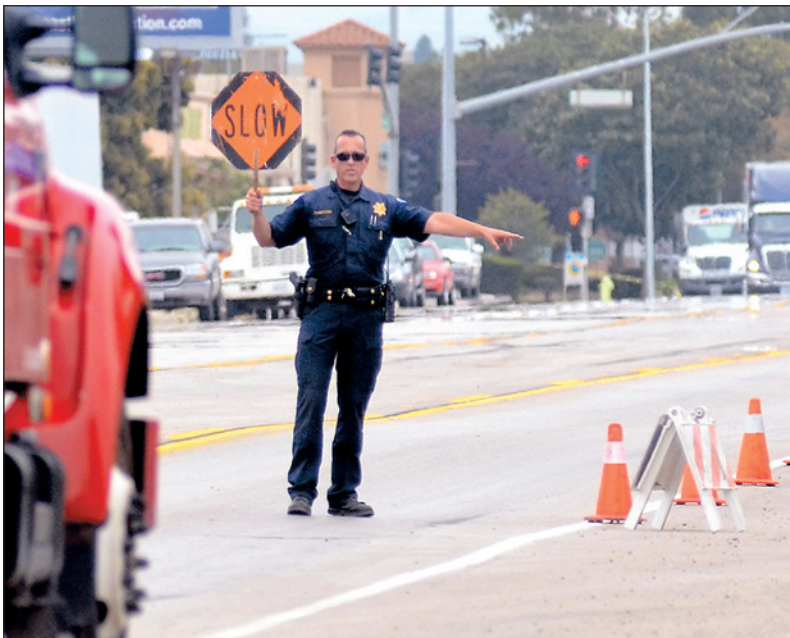
All trucks from 2007 or later have appropriate filters built in and do not need the retrofit.

A typical check takes 10-15 minutes. Inspectors have the driver floor the fuel pedal so they can check for excessive exhaust smoke.

They then inspect all engines to make sure they have the appropriate certification tags, and make sure the truck has the right filter.

A trucker picking up a load of strawberries to take back to Quebec said this was the first time he’d been stopped for such an inspection. He was given a \$300 citation for not having an emission control label on his engine.

All vehicles operating in Califor-



BILL MORSON/NEWS-PRESS

**CHP Officer Ken Sonniksen directs a heavy-duty vehicle to the Air Resources Board checkpoint in the eastbound lane of West Main Street in Santa Maria.**

nia must comply with the state’s strict air quality regulations.

“For these types of regulations, we have the most stringent regulations in the country. We also have the worst air quality in the country,” Mr. Tuter said.

He points to the American Lung Association’s most recent “State of the Air” report, which lists five California cities as the five most air polluted cities in the country — Bakersfield, Fresno, Hanford, Los Angeles, and Modesto.

Truckers have been hard pressed to comply with the myriad regulations coming from the board.

Michael Shaw of the California Trucker’s Association said it costs the industry more than \$1 billion annually to comply with costs.

The diesel particulate filters have been a particularly contentious issue. The filters are expensive, \$10,000-15,000 each, and can cause problems with truck engines. In February 2011 the California Dump Truck Owner’s association sued the board over the filters, but lost.

Many truckers are trading in for new vehicles rather than adding the filter, taking advantage of two government incentive programs.

The Carl Moyer Program pro-

vides grants and low-interest loans to truckers to retrofit their fleets to comply with diesel standards.

And the Hybrid and Zero-Emission Truck and Bus Voucher Incentive Project offers vouchers to offset the cost of changing to hybrid and electric vehicles.

The two programs award millions of dollars for truckers to update their fleets.

Mr. Shaw is quick to point out that the trucking industry is quickly moving toward energy efficient vehicles. He said he’s hopeful the government will continue to offer incentive programs to help the truckers along.

The transition is timely and necessary as the Air Resources Board will likely push for even stricter regulations in 2023 when the current regulations are set to expire.

The board’s vision document states, “For the long term, California has set for itself the 2050 goal of greenhouse gas emissions of 80 percent less than 1990 levels overall, and specifically 80 percent less than 1990 levels for the transportation sector.”

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## Sit ’n Sleep opens first Santa Barbara store

Well-known brand joins South Coast business community

By STEVE SINOVIC  
NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

California mattress retailer Sit ’n Sleep officially opened its 32nd store this week in downtown Santa Barbara.

Company founder and CEO Larry Miller, who did the honors at a ribbon cutting Tuesday morning, said he hopes to give local consumers a better reason to buy a new mattress at the retail store, which is located at 314 Anacapa St. in the same complex where REI is located.

Mr. Miller’s catchphrases, “You’re killing me, Larry!” featuring his long-suffering accountant Irwin, and “We’ll beat any competitor’s advertised price or your mattress is freeee!!!” have made him a household name in the Los Angeles media market, which now is ringed by Sit ’n Sleep stores.

Mr. Miller, a compelling salesman, said he’s gunning for more growth by opening stores in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties, hitting areas that he claims are being underserved by other mattress sellers.

He said he hopes to earn the business of locals with a good selection — 90 different brands are on the showroom floor — experienced sales team and competitive pricing.

Mr. Miller’s credo is having customers for life. As such, he said, he isn’t interested in making a sale just to hit a quota, but to “fit the right bed” for a customer.

“There’s nothing worse than a bad night’s sleep” with an uncomfortable mattress, said Mr. Miller, who sleeps like a baby, thanks to a firm mattress with a soft top.

The new store features Sleep Match technology that ensures customers get fitted for mattresses that meet their individual needs.

Key vendors include Sealy, Simmons, Serta, Kluft, Tempur-Pedic, Sherwood, Octaspring, Dr. Breus and Stearns & Foster.

For health’s sake, he recommends buying a new mattress set every eight years. Pillows should be changed once a year. “It’s a health and wellness issue,” he said, referring to a surefire anti-dust mite strategy.

Mr. Miller, who first opened a futon store in 1980, said his store morphed into mattress sales as the futon craze died down.

“I’ve done way better than I ever imagined,” said Mr. Miller, who formed the business with his dad. Both men chipped in \$10,000 each to open their first store. The



THOMAS KELSEY/NEWS-PRESS

**Larry Miller, center, and store manager Lori Cichoski perform the ribbon cutting honors, flanked by store employees and representatives of local charitable organizations.**

early years weren’t exactly a bed of roses.

“The best lessons I learned were from mistakes I made,” he said.

He anticipates gross revenues this year in the region of \$110 million. The Sit ’n Sleep executive team also is considering expansion to the San Diego and Las Vegas markets.

Manager Lori Cichoski will oversee a staff of three newly hired sales associates at the 8,500-square-foot store.

Sit ’n Sleep’s opening in Santa Barbara included announcements of donations to two local charities: Habitat for Humanity and Make A Wish.

Sit ’n Sleep is giving mattresses, frames and box springs to the Canon Perdido Affordable Homes project, a 12-home development for local, low-income families.

“I’m blown away. I think it’s wonderful,” said Joyce McCullough, executive director of Habitat for Humanity of Southern Santa Barbara County. “We are grateful and touched by this generous donation.”

Families will receive 12 queen and 22 twin-size mattresses.

“They build homes and we provide home furnishings,” said Mr. Miller with a shrug. “It’s a good fit.”

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# “Dad just fell.”

# “Mom can’t live alone any more.”

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