



Imperial County rolls out new air monitors and paving projects for northern cities



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IMPERIAL COUNTY, Calif. (KYMA) - Efforts to clear the air and protect public health in northern Imperial County are moving forward following a community meeting focused on local air quality solutions.

The Imperial County Air Pollution Control District (ICAPCD) hosted its latest Assembly Bill 617 (AB 617) Community Steering Committee meeting at the Westmorland Youth Hall.

For residents living along the heavily burdened Brawley, Westmorland, and Calipatria corridor, the initiative brings a welcome defense plan against daily environmental emissions.

Signed into law to protect disadvantaged communities disproportionately impacted by pollution, AB 617 provides targeted state funding for hyper-local tracking.

In partnership with the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and environmental firm SCS Engineers, the air district has successfully deployed a network of specialized air monitors across northern cities.

"So these are all the monitors we have between Brawley, Calipatria, and Westmorland," said Sergio Valenzuela, Senior Air Quality Technician for SCS Engineers.

The tracking network combines continuous sensors, mobile survey vans, and time-integrated sampling to isolate immediate emission impacts.

"They really shine as far as identifying what we call hotspot areas," explained Ismael Garcia, ICAPCD Project Manager. "Because we can deploy many, we can see trends."

Officials emphasized that the monitoring network relies heavily on local cooperation. Several residents and business owners stepped forward to act as "site hosts," allowing the high-tech equipment to be installed on their private properties.

"Our AB 617 site hosts, they are the champions who made this project possible," Valenzuela said. Forging these community relationships was a vital milestone for the program's rollout.

"Once we were able to get that first person to say yes, it really opened the door for us to get more people involved," Garcia noted. "It really helps bridge that gap as far as the government and the community aspect."

While data tracking isolates the trouble areas, the district is also moving into the construction phase to fix them.

Officials highlighted upcoming paving projects slated for the Phase One community designed to lock down fine particle pollution coming off unpaved roads.

"Paving is a tried and true method that we're familiar with, that has been well documented with what type of emission reductions we can see from it," Garcia said. "So it's really a good avenue for us to spend state money where it's gonna really make an impact for the community."

The AB 617 Steering Committee plans to hold these meetings monthly to maintain full transparency and ensure residents remain a core part of the decision-making process.

"We're trying to include the community because, as I said, AB 617 is meant to be responsive to community needs," Garcia emphasized. "We're only one part of the equation and getting people involved really is helpful to direct the program to be successful."

For continued updates on upcoming air district workshops and localized monitoring maps, visit the official AB 617.