



California Energy and Environment Update
January 11, 2011

Governor Brown retains Mary Nichols to chair CARB

Mary Nichols has been retained by Gov. Jerry Brown to serve as chairwoman of the California Air Resources Board. Nichols has led the board since 2007 and is known as a staunch defender of A.B. 32. Nichols has stated publicly that she does not see the work of CARB changing under Gov. Brown. Nichols noted that under her leadership, CARB would continue to work with the EPA on the next round of greenhouse gas emissions standards for vehicles.

Nichols was in Washington last week to talk with EPA about how California will blend its own climate rules with EPA's rules. She hopes EPA ultimately will recognize certain state efforts as being the equivalent of some of the initiatives EPA is considering implementing under its Clean Air Act authority. Nichols suggested that since EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson and Assistant Administrator for Air Gina McCarthy worked previously as state officials, they would be more willing to give states flexibility.

New year brings new regulations

The new year brought many new regulations into effect in California, changing the way Californians insure cars, buy light bulbs, and construct buildings.

In an effort to reduce carbon output and traffic congestion, car insurance plans are now required to allow drivers the option to shop for "pay as you drive" policies that reward them for reducing time in traffic.

The new year also brought a ban on 100-watt light bulbs in California. The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 states that by January 1, 2012 new bulbs must be 28 percent more efficient than the traditional 100-watt incandescent light bulbs. However, California put the rule into effect at the beginning of 2011, a year earlier than the rest of the nation. From now on, bulbs used in California cannot use more than 72 watts. According to the California Energy Commission, the rule will save consumers \$35.6 billion in higher electricity bills.

Construction companies are developing a program entitled CALGreen, which will establish a mandatory green building code. The program will apply to all jurisdictions statewide and will require builders to cut water usage, recycle construction waste, inspect energy systems, and use products from green manufacturers.

“Smart” electric meters criminalized in Bay Area

The Marin County Board of supervisors unanimously passed an ordinance to criminalize the installation of “smart” electric meters due to alleged health effects from electromagnetic waves. The board also cited concerns that the meters were being used to collect information about resident’s activities, negatively impacted aesthetics, and potentially damaged radio networks. The towns of Fairfax and Watsonville, as well as Santa Cruz County, have all passed laws against the meters. State Rep. Jared Huffman (D-San Rafael) introduced legislation in December requiring the California Public Utilities Commission to allow an opt-out provision before smart meter installation continues.