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City of Palm Springs Receives Grants to Enhance Air Quality In Area

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Reader Submitted*

The City of Palm Springs has received a \$137,700 grant from the County of Riverside through the Coachella Valley Air Quality Enhancement Trust Fund for several projects to improve air quality.

The City will use \$42,700 of the grant to install 20 Big Belly cordless solar-powered trash compactors in high-traffic areas of the Downtown business district. These compactors will replace 60 existing conventional open trash containers which, in turn, will reduce the frequency and number of trash collections that City employees must perform each day.

The ultimate goal is to replace all 150 existing trash containers with a total of 60 Big Belly solar-powered compactors over a three-year period.

"We believe that implementation of these compactors will reduce pollution from vehicles and man-hours spent on servicing existing trash containers by cutting down the frequency of trash collection trips," said Assistant City Manager Troy Butzlaff.

The City successfully field tested these compactors last year in the downtown area.

"Based on our experience thus far, we are confident that these compactors will reduce carbon dioxide emissions from vehicles by as much as 79 percent over a five-year period," Butzlaff said. "That is huge when you consider how much carbon dioxide, soot and nitrogen oxide is being produced by the vehicles currently being used to service the existing containers."

The remainder of the grant, \$95,000, will be used to install a gas treatment system that will be used to purify the anaerobic digester gas that is produced through the treatment of waste at the City's wastewater treatment plant. Once purified, the digester gas can be used as a fuel source for several internal combustion engine-driven pumps and a heating boiler. Currently, the digester gas is just burned off into the atmosphere. By using wasted renewable energy resources, the City hopes to enhance air quality in the region in two ways:

- ? reduce the City's dependence on public utility electrical generation, thereby eliminating a proportionate burning of fossil fuel in local generation stations
- ? remove contaminants from the digester gas and more efficiently combust the methane gas in on-site pumping systems and future cogeneration facilities

The City plans to commence with both projects in the next several months and hopes to have them operational by the end of the year.
