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Change To Trucks Could Improve Air Quality

Spartanburg County Vehicles Getting Special Filters

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SPARTANBURG COUNTY, S.C. --

In an effort to

protect your health and keep from pushing away economic development, Spartanburg County is making a big change to some of the trucks in its fleet.

Nine of the county's diesel trucks will be fit with a special filter. So far, five are done. The goal is to finish the other four by the end of the month.

Cummins Atlantic is doing the work.

"They're part of Spartanburg County and we like to spend our money in Spartanburg County," said Johnnie Lewis, manager of Spartanburg County's fleet.

At night, the trucks will have to be plugged in, which will power a heater that will cook off exhaust matter and turn it into ash.

According to county officials, each filter is expected to capture up to 85 percent of the truck's diesel emissions.

"The emissions coming off of those, they have small particulate matter that can be inhaled into your lungs. They're a potential carcinogen," said Brian Barnes of South Carolina's Department of Health and Environmental Control.

During a presentation put together by Upstate Forever, Barnes presented Spartanburg County with a check for \$148,900. The federal grant money will cover the cost of the filters for the nine vehicles.

"Maybe the EPA looks at that and they go, 'You know what, you're right. Let's give them a little time. Let's see what they can do,'" Barnes said.

According to Barnes, not meeting the Environmental Protection Agency's air quality standards could keep new business from coming to the Upstate and make it harder to get approval for new road projects.

"That's one of the first questions they're going to ask is, 'What's your attainment status?'" Barnes said.

According to Lewis, Spartanburg County is always looking for ways to reduce emissions. He said he recently met with a company about exploring propane power options. Plus, Spartanburg County already has a "no idle" policy.

"We're always open-minded," Lewis said.

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