

November 8, 2016

TO:

City of Palm Springs, CA

**Mayor Robert Moon
Mayor Pro Tem Chris Mills
Councilmembers, Ginny Foat,
Geoff Kors, and J.R. Roberts
Executive Assistant Jennifer Nelson
and
Sustainability Chairman Joseph Jackson**

FROM:

**Larry Will, PE
Leaf Blower Information Specialist**

Re: Gas-powered Leaf Blowers -

<http://www.palmspringsca.gov/home/showdocument?id=48482> dated October 24, 2016

After viewing the above web page, I feel compelled to readdress the leaf blower issue in Palm Springs. I sent a letter to each of you in June of this year in order to rebut false claims made regarding the leaf blower and its environmental impact. As I said in that letter, a report prepared by the California Environmental Protection Agency, Air Resources Board (CARB) from 2000 is being used to justify asking for a ban. That report, as it relates to emissions, is 16 years old and is totally inaccurate regarding leaf blowers built after 2005. Since that time, CARB has required leaf blower exhaust emission to be substantially reduced.

<http://leafblownoise.com/emission%20graph.htm>

Why is your staff ignoring that fact?

I am a former Vice President of Engineering for Echo Inc., a leading manufacturer of powered lawn care products. My employer has retained me after my retirement to address leaf blower concerns throughout the United States and Canada. I do this as a public service to our customers and to the cities faced with having to do something about inappropriate leaf blower use.

It is a fact that it is illegal for Palm Springs to regulate exhaust emission by any means including a ban. For the record, taken from the Federal Clean Air Act, 1990, "*No State or any political subdivision thereof shall adopt or attempt to enforce any standard relating to the control of emissions.*"

<http://leafblownoise.com/Taken%20from%20the%20Federal%20Clean%20Air%20Act.pdf> If a ban of gasoline powered leaf blowers is enacted with emissions being the

reason for such a ban, Palm Springs will be in direct violation of the Federal Clean Air Act, which is the authority by which CARB has created their own exhaust emission regulation.

Furthermore, in specific response to the claims made in your publication regarding gasoline powered leaf blowers, the following statements are incorrect and misleading:

They pollute the air - A single gas-powered leaf blower can emit as much pollution in a year as 80 cars!

Produce Hydrocarbons as a car driven for 510 hours (15,300 miles)

I seriously doubt this statement, but I will admit that leaf blowers manufactured prior to January 1, 2005 were serious contributors if compared to recently manufactured automobiles, however, modern leaf blower hydrocarbon exhaust emission has been reduced by 80 to 90%. Because of the running time of an automobile compared to that of a leaf blower per household, per week, the car is 30 times worse for the environment. Today's leaf blower engines have catalytic converters to address this component, same as the automobile.

http://leafblownoise.com/#Are_automobiles_cleaner

Produce as much Carbon Monoxide as a car driven for 26 hours (780 miles)

Carbon monoxide production and carbon dioxide production (green house gas) is a function of the amount of fuel oxidized. These components are generated in direct proportion to the amount of fuel consumed. Consider that the largest backpack leaf blower has roughly a 3.5 horse power engine and today's automobiles have engines greater than 100 horse power. Two hundred horsepower is not uncommon. The more fuel (hydrocarbons) converted to energy, the more CO and CO₂ is being generated. Really, it is clear which is worse.

http://leafblownoise.com/#Consider_greenhouse_gasses

They're noisy - A normal decibel level, considered acceptable in residential areas, is about 55 to 60 decibels (60 dB). Every increase in decibels means noise that is 10 times louder. Leaf blowers usually generate about 70-75 dB!

First of all, any automobile, truck, lawn mower, or motorcycle will exceed that unrealistically low value. Furthermore, the math is incorrect. For every 6 dB(A) change in sound pressure, the sound level is either doubled or halved, depending on if you are adding or subtracting dB(A)s.

http://leafblownoise.com/Measuring_Sound.pdf

Quiet gasoline powered leaf blowers are tested to be 65 dB(A) per the industry standard of 50 feet, not 70 to 75. Furthermore, the alternative of electric

powered leaf blower, mentioned in the presentation, is typically higher than 65 dB(A).

http://leafblownoise.com/#Are_electric_blowers_better

They worsen allergies and asthma and irritate the lungs - Because they operate at such high velocities, leaf blowers stir up the mold, allergens, and dust particles that otherwise have been tamped down with rain and decomposition.

This is a very bold statement, especially since there is no proof of this claim. The claim that blowers are hazardous to your health is an opinion, not a fact. The fact is that there are credible studies that indicate just the opposite, including the following from Greenwich, CT.

http://leafblownoise.com/#Greenwich_Department_of_Health_Statement

Yes, leaf blowers do move air rapidly, but from a two inch diameter nozzle. Twenty five feet beyond the nozzle, the air velocity can barely be measured due to air disbursement and natural turbulence restrictions. Unless the bystander is close to and directly in front of the nozzle, there is no hazard of any kind.

Produce as much Particulate Matter as a 1999-2000 model car driven for 49 hours at 30 miles per hour (1,470 miles)

The only dust that is hazardous to your health, because it remains airborne after being generated, is PM2.5 and PM10. Leaf blowers do not create or in any way generate this type of dust for if it exists, it will already be airborne. Diesel trucks and power plants are the source for this material. Larger particles found on the ground are heavier in comparison and will fall back to the earth a short distance from the blower nozzle.

http://leafblownoise.com/#Are_leaf_blowers_hazardous_to_your_health

http://leafblownoise.com/#Dust_study_and_comparison

As for cities in California that already have leaf blower bans, check into how well these bans are working. It doesn't work in LA nor does it work in Palo Alto or Santa Monica or just about any city where a ban exists.

http://leafblownoise.com/#Will_a_ban_work

I mentioned above that claiming the leaf blower is a health hazard is an opinion. I know that in some cases opinions can be important when deciding an issue. For example, the opinion that leaf blowers are noisy is justification for learning the facts about leaf blowers. No doubt this particular opinion was formed at a time when all blowers were noisy. Blowers that are 65 dB(A) per the ANSI Standard are 75 % quieter than most older units. I have no doubt that many quiet leaf blowers are already being used in Palm Springs for they have been available for 20 years. But unfortunately, if only one leaf blower in the neighborhood is noisy, all blowers tend to be reviled.

Some people are determined to see all gas-powered leaf blowers go away, and for the most part they will never change their minds, but a total ban will not make that happen. Leaf blowers, like other yard care products, are firmly entrenched as indispensable tools. Don't ban the leaf blower when you can effectively ban the reason for the problem instead. Ban the noise. A label

is attached to each unit indicating its sound level, making enforcement easy. If it doesn't have the label, it doesn't comply. <http://leafblowernoise.com/Sound%20label%20mounted.jpg>

Please keep in mind that I can answer any questions you or your staff may have regarding leaf blowers. You need only respond to this email with your inquiry.

Best regards,

Larry Will, PE, Vice President (retired)

Leaf Blower Information Specialist

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