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Governor Herbert, Mayor Becker Join Wasatch Front Mayors to Encourage Utahns to Take the 'Clean Air Challenge'

SALT LAKE CITY — Utah Governor Gary R. Herbert joined Salt Lake City Mayor Ralph Becker and mayors from across the Wasatch Front this morning to urge Utahns to participate in the "Clean Air Challenge."

"Utah is a beautiful state, but that beauty can be masked during the inversions that are characteristic of Utah winters," Governor Herbert said. "It will take a personal commitment from all of us – elected officials and citizens alike – to increase the quality of the air we breathe."

State and local officials, as well as citizens and utilities, have been working together to campaign against idling vehicles, to retro-fit school buses with cleaner technology, to install more energy efficient appliances and to promote public transit and carpooling.

The Utah Transit Authority has already accepted the Governor's challenge. Earlier today, UTA general manager John English announced that Feb. 12 will be "Learn to Ride Day."

"Mass transit is a perfect year-round option, and especially on 'red air alert' days when we need to limit our driving," the Governor said. "But it can also be a little intimidating for those who aren't familiar with the bus, TRAX and FrontRunner systems."

On Friday, Feb. 12, Utahns can ride UTA without charge to familiarize themselves with the services and, hopefully, begin an environment-friendly habit of using mass transportation options.

Earlier this year, Mayor Becker also extended a challenge to his constituents – to make a New Year's resolution to clear the air. Joined in the campaign by Salt Lake County Mayor Peter Corroon, Mayor Becker encouraged Salt Lake Valley residents to live a more "air-friendly lifestyle" during the winter inversion season.

"With more than 2 million people along the Wasatch Front – roughly 80 percent of Utah's population – no single business, no single municipality and no single individual can markedly improve the quality of our air," Mayor Becker said. "It's going to take all of us."

The Wasatch Front topography makes Utah particularly susceptible to winter inversions where colder air is trapped beneath a layer of warm air, trapping the pollution next to the valley floor. And the problem is aggravated by a growing population, more cars on the road and a diverse industrial economy.

"It's time for every Utahn to take personal responsibility to address this problem," Governor Herbert said. "This includes limiting driving and idling of vehicles, cutting back on the use of wood-burning stoves and conserving energy in their homes and offices."

For more simple tips on how to help improve Utah's air quality, visit www.cleanair.utah.gov.

Utahns can make their Clear The Air New Year's resolutions online at <http://apps.slcgov.com/general/absoluteftp/clearair.htm>.

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