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Consumers will find advantages twofold

By LAURA ARTATES

The EPA is adopting new emission standards for marine spark-ignition engines and small land-based non-road engines, including lawn equipment.

The new standards for gas-powered lawn equipment and marine engines were designed to protect public health by substantially reducing the amount of gas fumes, carbon monoxide, and smog-forming pollutants emitted from a wide range of engines.

The new standards will affect all new equipment of these types starting in 2010 and 2011.

Cars and trucks are still the biggest source of emissions in Middle Tennessee, but federal, state, and local standards for new cars and vehicle maintenance have helped improve our air quality as the cars we drive continue to get cleaner.

But as many of us are aware, small engines like those in lawn mowers and boats have had relatively little in the way of emission controls in the past.

These emissions, while small individually, add up to a significant pollution source. In fact, each year, Americans spend more than 3 billion hours using lawn and garden equipment and more than 500 million hours in recreational boating.

What you might not know is that just one hour of mowing your yard with a gasoline lawn mower can produce the same amount of pollution as driving 300 miles in a car.

This may seem surprising, unless you have noticed a blue cloud of smoke enveloping a yard that is being mowed with an older gasoline mower.

That is why the category of engines addressed by these new EPA standards is a critical step to improving our air quality. These types of engines contribute up to 17 percent of the smog-forming pollutants that play a role in the summertime air alerts in Middle Tennessee, according to estimates by the Metro Public Health Department. This category is second only to cars and trucks on the road.

Not only will the new standards help improve Middle Tennessee's air quality, but they will also save gas. And as we are all painfully aware these days, saving gas equals saving money.

The rule kicks into gear in 2011 for lawn and garden equipment of 25 horsepower or less. For a full range of gas-powered personal watercraft and inboard and outboard engines, the rule powers up in 2010.

So if you are planning to buy a new boat or riding mower, keep in mind that if you invest in a new cleaner technology, the payoff will be twofold. You and your family will breathe cleaner, healthier air, and you will be helping the environment. You might even save some fuel cost!

While it may be tempting to want to "beat" the new standards and buy now before the new standards take effect, hopefully your conscience will speak up and you can sleep better knowing that the boat you buy in 2010 will not be polluting the air every time you enjoy our beautiful Middle Tennessee lakes.
