

Supervisors ask gas rationing

Gov. Brown is requested to declare a state of emergency

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Santa Clara County supervisors today asked Gov. Edmund G. Brown Jr. to declare a state of emergency that would give the county authority to impose an odd-even gas rationing system.

Acting on a motion by Supervisor Dom Cortese, the board unanimously requested the governor to begin emergency measures to meet fuel shortages and an impending four-day gas dealers strike.

The move went beyond the supervisors' action last week when the board deferred action on an odd-even allocation plan proposed by the Santa Clara County Service Station Dealers' Association.

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The emergency authority is invested in the governor although the county ran a mandatory rationing plan during the first fuel crisis of 1973-74.

Supervisors Cortese and Dan McCorquodale contended the move was necessary because state allocation levels were dropping to 85 percent of last year's level.

"We can argue and debate the availability of gas," McCorquodale said. "But as a matter of fact, you only have to go down the street to see that we have a problem."

Supervisor Rod Diridon, who is expected to

travel to Washington, D.C. next week, said he will meet with Department of Energy officials to discuss the situation.

The next move rests with the governor, who has given no immediate indication of willingness to declare an emergency.

The board said it would be willing to meet in special session this week to discuss emergency measures.

Under an odd-even system of gas rationing, motorists would be allowed to buy gas every other day. The availability would be determined by the last number on their vehicle licenses.

Many Santa Clara County service stations were out of gasoline today while others were pumping what little of the precious fuel they managed to stretch to this last day of the month,

service station officials said.

Meanwhile, there were signs this weekend that Bay area motorists are starting to cut down on their driving with reports of reduced traffic on the freeways, according to area California Highway Patrol offices.

Northern California resort areas also reported a drop in tourism.

"Many dealers are out of gasoline today and I'm sure it's going to be difficult in many areas of the Valley to buy fuel," said George Saunders, president of the Santa Clara County Service Station Dealers Association.

Saunders also noted that, "Many dealers did save some of their gas supplies for today, know-

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ing that after a tough weekend, many customers need fuel badly. So, some will be open today, but at the same time, quite a number of them are out until their suppliers can get some to them."

Saunders said some stations should start getting part of their May allocations on Tuesday.

However, he predicted some stations might not receive gasoline deliveries until as late as Thursday.

"Tuesday begins a new month of allocation, but suppliers are limited as far as trucks and drivers for distribution. It may be Wednesday or Thursday before all stations are back in business," said Saunders.

In the past, Saunders said a service station dealer who was about to run out of his monthly allocation, would be able to borrow one load of gas against the next month's allocation.

"But, we've gotten telegrams from Chevron, and Shell has let its dealers know that this is no longer possible. The supply situation is so tight that no deviation from the allocation program will be permitted," Saunders said.

"Most oil companies have been severely chastised by the Department of Energy for not adhering to the allocation regulations. As a result, they (oil companies) have had to tighten up even further as far as strict adherence."

Saunders also said the month of May doesn't look as bright as dealers expected.

The Department of Energy had announced a new allocation plan that they felt would provide more gasoline for county motorists.

The new regulations, which are supposed to go into effect Tuesday, update the base allocation period and provide some relief for areas that have experienced growth.

However, Saunders noted that Chevron has said it would cut back its allocation to 80 percent for its dealers. And, Shell has cut back to 85 percent.

Chevron last month was allocating 95 percent

of the gasoline it did at the same month last year to its dealers.

"May does not look as good as April for area gasoline suppliers," said Saunders.

"Part of the problem is we're not expecting the new rules to give us as much help as we expected. They're going to give us back a cup full and take away a gallon," Saunders added.

Saunders also predicted that other oil suppliers will cut back on their allocations to dealers next month. "It's going to make things very, very tight in this area."

CHP dispatchers in Santa Clara County, San Francisco and Sacramento reported slightly lighter than normal traffic for the weekend.

"The officers think traffic is 10 to 20 per cent lighter," said Betty Klein, dispatcher for the Sacramento CHP covering parts of six counties.

"And we've had fewer accidents than usual. Usually on a Sunday we'll have six or eight and this Sunday we've had about three," she said.

Resort business in Northern California was reported down over the weekend as motorists stayed home rather than risk running out of fuel.

Business at Reno, Nev., casinos was reported off although gas stations remained open and lines were short.

The California State Automobile Association said emergency road service calls for motorists out of gas had jumped from a five-hour Sunday morning average of 10 to about 50.

Southern Nevada police agencies reported numerous service station closings, coupled with long lines and dozens of fistfights among motorists at the few remaining stations with gasoline to sell in Las Vegas.

While an advertising campaign in southern California paid for by the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority promised plenty of auto fuel in southern Nevada, many stations began placing "no more gas today" signs by their pumps as early as Friday night.

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