



CITY OF GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM

Report: Report Regarding Potential Ban on Gas-Powered Lawn and Landscaping Equipment

1. Motion to Note and File report of a ban on gas-powered lawn and landscaping equipment.
2. Motion providing direction regarding next steps on Consideration of ban on gas-powered lawn and landscaping equipment.

COUNCIL ACTION

Item Type: Action Item

Approved for October 11, 2022 **calendar**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

California Assembly Bill No. 1346 introduces the ban on gas-powered small off-road engines (SOREs) used in lawn and garden equipment due to their highly polluting nature. This act would ban the sale of such equipment in California by 2024, or whenever the California Air Resources Board deems it necessary. Many cities have banned the sale and/or use of gas-powered leaf blowers.

Implementing a ban on all gas-powered small off-road engines would be one of the most progressive ordinances in the state. However, implementation is challenging because of enforcement for the City and transitional challenges for the affected businesses and organizations.

COUNCIL PRIORITIES

Environmental Stewardship: Gas-powered landscaping equipment, Small Off-Road Engines (SOREs), and generator engines produce high levels of air pollutants that contribute to climate change and affect users' health. Action regarding using such equipment would impact Glendale's environment and the health of its community.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff respectfully recommend that City Council provide feedback, and note and file this report regarding the Consideration of a ban on gas-powered lawn and landscaping equipment. Staff also recommend that City Council provide direction on whether or not staff should investigate any type of ban on gas-powered SOREs.

If City Council wishes to pursue a ban on gas-powered SOREs, staff recommend that City Council provides direction on:

- Type of ban - a ban on the sale of the items or a ban on the use of the items.
- Scope of ban - should the ban focus solely on leaf blowers or gas-powered SOREs?

BACKGROUND

California Assembly Bill No. 1346 (AB 1346) bans gas-powered small off-road engines (SOREs), typically used in lawn and garden equipment¹. SOREs are spark-ignition engines rated at or below 19 kilowatts². It is equipment like lawnmowers, leaf blowers, golf carts, chainsaws, and other equipment used in landscaping, logging, airport ground support, and commercial utility equipment.

The ban on SOREs comes in place due to high levels of air pollutants, such as oxides of nitrogen (NO_x), reactive organic gases (ROG), and particulate matter (PM). For instance, 1 hour of operating a lawn mower emits as much smog-forming pollution as a 2017 Toyota Camry driving 300 miles, and 1 hour of leaf blower use is equivalent to driving 1,100 miles³.

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) is required to set emission requirements for all SOREs to zero by 2024, or whenever it determines it is feasible⁴. In December of 2022, CARB approved updates to its SOREs regulations, with 2024 and subsequent model years to have zero emission standards for the first phase⁵. Essentially, it bans the sale of gas-powered SOREs by 2024. To support businesses, \$30 million will be available to sole proprietors and other small landscaping businesses to assist in the purchase of zero-emission SOREs⁶.

Although AB 1346 and the updated CARB regulations address new equipment, it does not regulate the use of existing SOREs. In the absence of State regulation, it is within the City Council's authority to establish regulations specifically within the City⁷.

AB 1346 and the updated CARB regulations include a ban on the sale of gas-powered generators and large pressure washers, with implementation commencing in 2028⁸. This report does not cover bans on gas-powered generators and large power washers.

Currently, multiple air districts⁹ and cities have implemented initiatives and policies to reduce the use of gas-powered lawn equipment. Many Air Districts, like the Santa Barbara, San Joaquin, and South Coast Air Districts, offer incentives and rebates for companies to electrify their gas-powered landscaping equipment. Some Air Districts, like Antelope Valley and South Coast Air Districts, offered incentives for residents to upgrade their landscaping equipment to electric. Cities like Berkeley, Beverly Hills, West Hollywood, and recently Pasadena and South Pasadena ban the use of gas-powered blowers, with some cities, like Del Mar, Laguna Beach, and Santa Monica, taking it further and banning both gas and electric blowers¹⁰. The City and County of San Francisco introduced the Healthier, Cleaner, Quieter Communities Act that would ban the use of gas-powered equipment for landscaping¹¹. LA County is investigating a similar ban for unincorporated communities, along with incentives for electric equipment¹².

ANALYSIS

Considerations

Extension of the Ban

Despite AB 1346 banning gas-powered SOREs sales, most city bans on gas-powered lawn equipment are specifically on leaf-blowers as a noise nuisance and include the ban as part of the city's noise ordinance. Most city governments do not ban other gas-powered landscaping equipment, such as lawnmowers, trimmers, and chainsaws. If San Francisco implements the Healthier, Cleaner, Quieter Communities Act, it would represent one of the strictest bans in the state, covering leaf blowers and other landscaping equipment. LA County may also consider the ban of other gas-powered SOREs in addition to leaf-blowers.

Enforcement

Enforcement remains one of the top challenges of implementing a ban on gas-powered lawn equipment. Enforcement challenges include:

- Deciding how the ban is enforced. Is it enforced as a zoning violation or considered a citation?

- Deciding who enforces the ordinance. Is it the police or is it an inspector?
- Allocating enforcement resources. How many employees and how often are these inspectors deployed to enforce the ordinance?
- Deciding who is penalized. Are the landscapers penalized or the entity that commissioned the work?

Some cities, such as South Pasadena and West Hollywood, penalize the person or organization that commissioned the work and authorized the use of gas-powered equipment. West Hollywood hired a code enforcement technician to manage the gas-powered leaf blower ban.

Business Transition

Another consideration of a ban is the challenges associated with transitioning to all-electric equipment for landscaping businesses and organizations. These challenges revolve around infrastructure, acquiring equipment, and training.

Businesses transitioning to electric landscaping equipment need infrastructure for charging and storing equipment. Their infrastructure needs to handle increased electricity demand, have adequate ventilation, and meet Fire Codes. For instance, the City of Glendale's Community Services and Parks (CSP) department changed its operations and upgraded facilities to safely and adequately charge new electric equipment.

Acquiring electric landscaping equipment is another challenge. Businesses, local governments, and other landscaping organizations would compete for rebates from the South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD). In addition, to meet the same operating power and duration as gas-powered equipment, companies and organizations will need to buy additional batteries and equipment to serve as charged backups.

For businesses and residents, equipment rebates, as well as battery buy-down rebate programs, are available through the South Coast (AQMD). However, funding for lawn and garden equipment exchange program is currently closed and may reopen in the future, dependent upon funding availability from the State of California.

While many cities do not offer rebates but refer to the South Coast AQMD rebate program, some others do. The City of San Mateo provides rebates of up to 50% of the purchase of an electric leaf blower for residents, and commercial companies can receive rebates of up to 75%¹³. In 2021, the Town Council of Yountville allocated \$30,000 for an incentive program to help residents and businesses purchase electric

leaf blowers and vacuums¹⁴. Redwood City offers rebates for electric lawn care equipment for residents and commercial operators¹⁵.

Additionally, staff training is a hurdle. Training includes teaching staff to use the new electric equipment and balancing job efficiency with battery longevity. Using a tool at a higher setting allows for more power but drains the battery faster, resulting in more frequent charging.

Technology and Battery Recycling

Lastly, technological availability and recycling accessibility are additional considerations. A list of electric landscaping equipment is in Exhibit 2.

Most hand-held, backpack, and push landscaping equipment have electric battery-powered alternatives available. These types of equipment are likely to be used frequently. For equipment that is used occasionally, like sod cutters and large wide area ride-on lawn mowers, finding electric alternatives is difficult or not available.

Then, there is the concern of battery replacement and recycling. Many manufacturers offer warranties on their products varying from 1 to 5 years. Glendale residents can drop off batteries at the Household Hazardous Waste Center. The Small Business Program at the Household Hazardous Waste Center allows businesses to set up an account at a subsidized cost to dispose of hazardous waste¹⁶. LA County has four permanent collection centers for hazardous and electronic waste that businesses can access¹⁷.

Potential Ban Approaches

Type of Ban

1. Ban on the use of gas-powered leaf blowers and/or SOREs

The first type of ban the City Council can consider is to ban the use of gas-powered leaf blowers and/or SOREs.

Many cities first approach this ban by addressing their parks and landscaping facilities. For instance, Pasadena's leaf blower ban started with its staff and facilities, and LA County would implement a gas-powered SORE ban on their park facilities first. Then, cities typically expand the ban to other organizations that operate in the city after a couple of years.

Community Services and Parks has been transitioning to electric landscaping equipment for the past few years, with the mini-park facilities converted. The rest of the park system is currently being converted, which will take approximately two additional years.

Most cities have a ban specifically on gas-powered leaf blowers. If the City Council were to pursue such a ban, it would be aligned with many other cities. A ban focusing on gas-powered leaf blowers would likely be a faster and easier transition for organizations since electric leaf blowers are available and comprise only one piece of equipment to update.

If the City of Glendale pursues a ban on the use of gas-powered equipment, the ban would require a transitional approach. This approach allows companies and organizations a few years to transition their commonly used and easily electrified equipment, like backpack leaf blowers and push lawnmowers.

For many companies and organizations affected, electric landscaping equipment is available to meet their business's needs, but funding to acquire the equipment and develop any necessary infrastructure may be a hurdle. Enforcement of such a ban would likely require more City resources.

2. Ban on the sale of gas-powered SOREs

Alternatively, the City can pursue a ban on the sale of new gas-powered SOREs. It aligns with AB 1346 and would likely be easier to enforce. However, it does not prohibit the use of gas-powered SOREs in Glendale.

A ban on the sale of new gas-powered SOREs would be one of the most progressive bans in the state, along with what San Francisco introduced and LA County is evaluating.

STAKEHOLDERS/OUTREACH

Stakeholder outreach has yet to occur. Depending on the direction that council will like to take, staff will focus outreach on the affected groups. Suppose council directs staff to investigate a ban on the sale or use of gas powered leaf blowers or gas powered SOREs. In that case, staff will provide a report to the Sustainability Commission so they may provide their recommendations for council to consider.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CEQA/NEPA)

This item is considered a ministerial activity and therefore, not subject to CEQA review.

CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE

This item is exempt from campaign disclosure requirements.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Direct Staff to investigate a ban on the sale of gas-powered leaf blowers.
2. Direct Staff to investigate a ban on the sale of gas-powered SOREs.
3. Direct Staff to investigate a ban on the use of gas-powered leaf blowers.
4. Direct Staff to investigate a ban on the use of gas-powered SOREs.
5. Direct Staff to not move further with a ban on the sale nor the use of gas-powered SOREs.
6. City Council may choose an alternative not put forward by staff.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

Prepared by:

Elizabeth Harris, Administrative Associate

Approved by:

Roubik R. Golanian, P.E., City Manager

EXHIBITS/ATTACHMENTS

1. Report Citation List
2. Sampling of Electric Landscaping Equipment