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Author

Whalen, Patrick

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California City Restricts CFC Use, Production

By Patrick Whalen
Special to The Washington Post

LOS ANGELES, July 19—The city of Irvine, in a move applauded by environmentalists and denounced by some manufacturers, has approved what is thought to be the nation's most comprehensive ordinance restricting the use of chlorofluorocarbons and other compounds known to deplete Earth's ozone layer.

The ordinance, approved 4 to 1 Tuesday night by the City Council, will affect producers or users of CFC's in Irvine, a planned community about 55 miles south of Los Angeles that is home to many high-technology industries. Irvine Mayor Larry Agran predicts many jurisdictions will follow Irvine's example.

Agran, the driving force behind the ordinance, said that 400 to 500 of Irvine's 5,000 businesses—from fast-food packagers to air conditioner

servicing companies and computer manufacturers—will have to change their ways. The act will take effect next July 1.

California contributes 5 percent of global CFC emissions, which total about 130 million pounds per year, according to Kate Wade of the non-profit advocacy group Citizens for a Better Environment. Agran said Irvine's annual contribution is about 500,000 pounds.

Todd Nicholson, president of the Industrial League of Orange County, a group representing more than 900 companies, predicted that the city will receive "a great number of applications for exemptions."

Agran pursued the ordinance without the usual formation of an advisory council to address issues raised by citizens and industry, Nicholson said. "We're disappointed that the mayor pushed this through without more consultation," he added.

"Major municipalities are going to be taking action well ahead of national and international leadership on the depletion of the ozone layer," Agran said. He said the Center for Innovative Diplomacy, which he directs, will host a conference on the issue this weekend in Irvine for mayors and other local leaders.

Manufacturers using the listed compounds for drugs, medical devices and military applications will be exempt from the ordinance in compliance with federal regulations, Agran said.

Industry and manufacturing leaders said the measure will hobble international efforts already under way to limit the use of CFCs and will make survival tougher for small businesses that use the compounds. Responding to that argument, Agran said, "If we wait until all these people take action, we might as well kiss off the future of the globe."