Will U.S. follow California's emissions lead?

By HAL PHILLIPS

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — The state of California is generally seen as America's bellwether. As California goes — economically, culturally, politically — so goes the country.

In light of the recent ruling from the California Air Resource Board (CARB) — forbidding the sale of gas-powered golf cars after Jan. 1, 1997 — do golf car manufacturers see other states or federal agencies following suit?

"First of all, the amount of emissions a golf car produces is insignificant," said Todd Sauey, president of Columbia Par Car. "But I don't think the rest of the country will pursue similar measures that quickly. They won't change as fast as automotive emission standards, for example.

"I think other states will see how California fares and phase restrictions in over the next 20 years."

Ron Skenes of E-Z-GO believes most of the country will let the market decide between gas- and electric-powered golf cars.

"It's up to the consumer," he said. "But we're watching the California situation very carefully. I'm not sure whether it's an indicator of things to come. It's too early to tell."

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While the golf car industry — after lobbying from the National Golf Car Manufacturers Association (NGCMA) — received a two-year reprieve. The ARB staff has ruled that gas-powered cars not be sold in California any time after Jan. 1, 1997.

However, all gas-powered cars in use at that time will be grandfathered for the duration of their lifespans.

The ban on gas-powered golf car sales after 1996 is only valid in California.

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