

## **State's Air Is Among Nation's Most Toxic**

**Only New York has a higher risk of cancer caused by airborne chemicals, the EPA says.**

By Marla Cone, Times Staff Writer

Los Angeles Times Wed., March 22, 2006

Despite two decades of cleaning up carcinogenic fumes from cars and factories, Californians are breathing some of the most toxic air in the nation, with residents of Los Angeles and Orange counties exposed to a cancer risk about twice the national average.

A nationwide, county-by-county snapshot of the cancer threat posed by air pollution provides a troubling portrait of California, revealing that many potent chemicals still pose an excessive risk.

New York tops the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's list, followed closely by California, while rural residents of Wyoming, South Dakota and Montana have the least chance of contracting cancer from breathing the air.

One in every 15,000 Californians - or 66 per million - is at risk of contracting cancer from breathing the air over his or her lifetime, according to the EPA's National-Scale Air Toxics Assessment, which was released in February and based on emissions of 177 chemicals in 1999, the most recent data available.

In the Los Angeles area, the cancer threat is much higher, 93 per million in Los Angeles County - or one person in every 10,700 - and 79 per million in Orange County. The national average is 41.5 per million: one in every 24,000 Americans. Riverside and San Bernardino counties are near the U.S. average.

Although a tiny fraction of all cancers in the United States are caused by chemicals, an array of air pollutants has been shown to cause lung cancer or leukemia in both human and animal studies. Some have been classified as known human carcinogens for 20 years or longer.

The biggest contributors, by far, are cars, trucks and other mobile sources that burn gasoline or diesel fuel.

"One of the most significant environmental exposures" to cancer-causing chemicals for Californians comes from breathing them, said Melanie Marty, chief of air toxicology and epidemiology at the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment. "People should understand that mobile sources have very large impacts on health. It's not just asthma and heart disease. It's cancer too."

A Times review of the national assessment as well as other, more up-to-date federal and state databases shows that the levels of most carcinogenic chemicals have declined substantially in California in recent years.

Nevertheless, for at least 10 chemicals, Californians are still exposed to higher cancer risks than the levels considered acceptable under government guidelines.

"The key thing here is recognizing that we still have a huge problem," said Janice Nolen, the American Lung Assn.'s national policy director. "While we are headed in the right direction, we have to figure out what more we can do. Clearly, having so much benzene [and other chemicals] in L.A. that you have a 93-in-a-million risk factor for cancer is not acceptable."

California officials say the danger is far worse. They have calculated a cancer risk that is about 15 times higher for the Los Angeles region because they included diesel exhaust, which was excluded from the EPA's numbers, and ranked other chemicals as more potent than the EPA did.

When exhaust from diesel engines - which scientists consider the biggest cancer threat - is included, one in every 714 residents of the Los Angeles Basin (1,400 per million) could contract cancer from air pollution, the South Coast Air Quality Management District says.

Two ingredients of gasoline - benzene and butadiene - topped the EPA's list of the most dangerous airborne carcinogens. Emitted mostly from car tailpipes, they are responsible for 35% of the cancer risk posed by air pollutants, the EPA data show. Both have been linked to leukemia in human and animal studies.

Others with high risks include naphthalene and acetaldehyde, also mostly from vehicles, and chromium, from industries.

The goal of the national assessment is to help identify which sources and areas of the country still need to be targeted by air pollution controls.

"These numbers are definitely estimates. They are not etched in stone. But they are the best way, and the only way, to look at risk and inform the agencies about which chemicals are important and should be reduced," Marty said.

In the EPA assessment, only New Yorkers faced a bit more danger than Californians, with a risk of 68 cancers per million. Oregon ranked third, largely because of motor vehicle exhaust and smoke from forest fires and fireplaces. Washington, D.C., was fourth, with New Jersey fifth.

Joseph Landolph, a USC expert on chemical carcinogenesis who serves on state and EPA scientific advisory panels, said he was surprised that California remained so high on the list despite decades of regulation.

In 1983, the Legislature enacted a landmark law regulating toxic air contaminants, and since then, state and local air quality officials have set the nation's most stringent controls on vehicles, fuels and industries.

The risks from benzene and butadiene were much worse before the state Air Resources Board ordered gasoline to be reformulated 10 years ago and tightened auto emission standards.

Last year, about 13,000 tons of benzene was released into California's air, about 40% less than in 2001, and butadiene declined 60% to 3,000 tons, according to the air board's Almanac of Emissions and Air Quality.

John Froines, a UCLA School of Public Health professor who chairs California's scientific review panel on toxic air contaminants, cautioned that benzene and butadiene remain dangerous, saying scientists recently discovered that they are even stronger carcinogens than previously thought.

"Clearly, benzene and butadiene are candidates for additional controls," Froines said. "An analysis needs to be done on the sources of the two and then consideration given to control strategies. Butadiene is a very potent carcinogen and should be given more attention than it has."

In Los Angeles County, benzene is responsible for a risk of 24 cancers per million people and butadiene for 10 cancers per million, according to the EPA data. Federal and state guidelines generally consider one cancer per million as an acceptable risk for each air pollutant.

"It's going to be pretty hard to get these compounds below one in a million, because of the sheer volume of people and cars in the South Coast and any urban area," Marty said. "It's a laudable target but hard to reach."

Today's cars are already about 99% cleaner than cars of the 1970s. Many experts say advanced auto technologies such as fuel cells and hydrogen internal combustion engines are the only solution. Under Air Resources Board rules, 50,000 such cars must be offered for sale in California by 2017, but it may be decades before large numbers are on the roads.

"We've come a great distance in reducing ... emissions from our automobiles over the past 30 years," said Charles Territo, an Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers spokesman. "We'll continue to work on improving catalysts, and we're working on a number of advanced technologies that will reduce the amount of gasoline that our products use."

In California, industries are now minor sources of most carcinogens; several industrial chemicals high on the EPA list have been phased out.

In 1999, Sacramento County had California's highest cancer risk - and among the nation's highest - from air pollution, with 135 cancers per million residents, according to the EPA assessment. But the risk has dropped by two-thirds since one company - Aerojet, a space and defense contractor in Rancho Cordova - stopped emitting hydrazine by switching from liquid rocket fuel to solid.

Some California neighborhoods, however, are still "hot spots" for carcinogenic fumes from industries. For example, although tetrachloroethylene has been virtually eliminated as a degreaser in the aerospace industry, dry cleaners still emit it. Also, some metal-plating plants release chromium.

Yet overall, vehicles, particularly those powered by diesel fuel, pose the most danger. About 70% of the Los Angeles Basin's airborne cancer risk comes from diesel exhaust, 20% from chemicals emitted mostly by cars and 10% from industry emissions, the AQMD said in a 2000 report.

In studies of railroad workers, truck drivers and mechanics in various places, diesel exhaust - at concentrations similar to those the general population breathes in major U.S. cities - has been linked to lung cancer.

Levels will drop, however, because EPA rules require refiners to start producing ultra-low-sulfur diesel fuel this summer and equip 2007-model diesel trucks with devices that cut toxic gases and soot.

Diesel exhaust was excluded from the national cancer risks because EPA scientists decided they could not calculate the numbers without more data on its potency and what levels cause cancer.

Scientists with the California Environmental Protection Agency disagree, saying there is ample evidence of diesel's high carcinogenic potency. Also, California ranks benzene and other compounds as more powerful than the U.S. EPA does. The federal agency calls formaldehyde, emitted by mobile sources, a weak carcinogen, while the state ranks it among the top five threats.

As a result, state officials believe that many more Californians are in danger than the EPA says, even when excluding diesel. About 406 in every million people in the Los Angeles Basin could get cancer from air contaminants excluding diesel - four times the EPA's estimate - and 1,400 per million including diesel, the AQMD reports.

While scientists debate how many cancers to blame on air pollution, one fact remains clear: Most cancers are caused by other factors. One in three Americans, or 330,000 in a million, will contract a form of the disease, and all 177 air pollutants are believed responsible for less than 1%.

Nevertheless, unlike risks such as cigarette smoking and diet, breathing is not voluntary, so targeting toxic air must remain a priority, public health officials say.

"Even with all the population growth in California, we have made big progress," Marty said. "If we had done nothing, the cancer risk would be so much worse now. But on the other hand, we have a long way to go. We're going to have to grab the bull by the horns now with mobile sources."

*For more information about the EPA assessment, go to*  
<<<http://www.epa.gov/ttn/atw/nata1999/index.html>>> .

## **California's air second-dirtiest in nation, EPA says**

In the S.F. Chronicle & Bakersfield Californian, Wed., March 22, 2006

Los Angeles (AP) -- Californians breathe the second-dirtiest air in the nation, with residents of Los Angeles and Orange counties exposed to a cancer risk that's about double the national average, according to a new report.

Only New York has worse air quality than California, the report by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency concludes. The problem here continues despite decades of efforts statewide to cut carcinogenic fume emissions from cars and factories.

The report by the EPA's National-Scale Air Toxics Assessment estimates that one in every 15,000 Californians - or 66 per million - is at risk of contracting cancer from breathing the air during his or her lifetime. The cancer threat is 93 per million in Los Angeles County and 79 per million in Orange County.

The national average is 41.5 per million, according to the report, which was released in February and based on emissions of 177 chemicals in 1999, the most recent data available. New York's cancer risk is estimated at 68 per million.

The biggest pollutants in California are cars, trucks and other mobile sources that burn gasoline or diesel fuel.

"People should understand that mobile sources have very large impacts on health. It's not just asthma and heart disease. It's cancer too," said Melanie Marty, chief of air toxicology and epidemiology at the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment.

California officials say the cancer risk is far greater than the EPA estimates, primarily because its report did not include diesel exhaust. When that's factored in, the cancer risk soars 15-fold, meaning 1,400 residents per million could get cancer from air pollution in the Los Angeles basin, according to the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

Oregon, Washington, D.C. and New Jersey had the third, fourth and fifth worst air in the nation, respectively, according to the EPA assessment.

Rural residents of Wyoming, South Dakota and Montana breathed the cleanest air.

## **Group asks citizens to take to their bicycles**

BY JAMES BURGER, Californian staff writer  
Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday, March 22, 2006

The racks are red and blue and yellow and shaped like the things they're designed to hold -- bicycles.

The three colorful shapes bolted to the sidewalk on Chester Avenue and 17th Street herald the appearance of a new nonprofit group in downtown Bakersfield.

It is called Bike Bakersfield and the three young men leading it have a message for you: Get on your bike and ride.

If you can't afford a bike, they'll build one for you out of spare parts and donated frames, said Executive Director Brian Keegan.

And, if you are afraid of riding on Bakersfield's high-speed streets, the Bike Bakersfield crew will help you find a safe route.

Communications Director Mat Barton is working on a comprehensive map of safe routes.

They may even find you a Bike Buddy to ride the route with you and teach you the rules of the road.

The goal, said program director Austin Smith, is to get people to climb out of their cars and turn to their bikes for transportation.

"It's a one-person-at-a-time thing to get people riding," Smith said.

But Bike Bakersfield isn't planning to fight the bike battle one person at a time.

They've got bigger dreams.

They'll put up 12 billboards promoting bike riding for fun, clean air and health in April.

And they are hoping to convince local employers to provide secure bike storage and showers to employees who want to switch their commute from gas-power to pedal-power.

If a business wants one of those cool-colored bike racks in front of their front door, the Bike Bakersfield crew can help out.

Kathy Butler of the Downtown Business Association said the nonprofit is already getting involved in downtown events and will hold a bicycle race during the first downtown street fair of the summer.

"It's a whole new group of people that are working with us and they're real excited," she said.

Bike Bakersfield got its seed money, Smith said, from his father, Bob Smith, a local engineer and bike rider.

They've been in existence for two months and already have a basement office on Chester Avenue.

Every nook and cranny in the office, fittingly, is crammed with bikes, the frames of bikes and a wild collection of tires.

Here's how you can get involved in Bike Bakersfield:

Visit the Web site at: [BikeBakersfield.org](http://BikeBakersfield.org). It has plenty of bike ideas and a funny story about a ground squirrel.

Call the office at: 321-9247 Or just walk into the Bike Bakersfield office: 1708 Chester Ave. Weekly meetings: Held at 5 p.m. Wednesdays at its office.

## **Quest for clean energy**

### **Chevron, PG&E cited for positive steps to combat global warming**

David R. Baker, Chronicle Staff Writer  
S.F. Chronicle Wed., March 22, 2006

After years of denial or uncertainty, many of the world's largest corporations have started taking global warming seriously and are looking for ways to fight it.

Others don't appear to be so diligent.

That's the conclusion of a report released Tuesday by Ceres, a coalition of institutional investors and environmentalists based in Boston.

The report found that some businesses -- including the Bay Area's Calpine Corp., Chevron Corp. and Pacific Gas and Electric Co. -- have taken specific steps to rein in emissions of greenhouse gases and pursue cleaner forms of energy.

But many others haven't, according to the report. Exxon Mobil Corp. and San Diego's Sempra Energy were singled out for criticism, with Exxon rating lower than any other major oil company examined.

Ceres wants to prod those companies into action. The risks posed by a warming world, coalition members argue, could seriously hurt corporate profits and investor returns. At the same time, businesses might be able to make money by finding solutions to the problem -- or at least ways to deal with it.

"Clearly, we are entering an era when there will be limits on global greenhouse gas emissions," said California Treasurer Phil Angelides, who co-founded one of the investor organizations in the coalition. "The companies that succeed in this new environment, this new reality, are the ones that address global warming."

When Ceres last examined the topic three years ago, few companies met that standard. Since then, however, corporations worldwide have begun to face global warming. Oil giants BP and Chevron, for example, have addressed the topic in high-profile ad campaigns.

Environmentalists welcome the change in tone. But they note that in many cases, businesses have been more willing to discuss the problem than take steps to fight it.

"Even corporate executives who have been hostile to the environment are waking up to the realities," said Daniel Becker, director of the Sierra Club's global warming program. "The challenge is what do they do about it. And there is still a huge gap between recognizing the problem and doing something about it."

The report's authors looked for specific steps, using them to rank the largest companies in several industries. They awarded companies points for designating board members to deal with climate change and publicly articulating strategies for dealing with the problem. Companies that tracked their greenhouse gas emissions also received credit.

Ceres singled out for praise BP and chemical company DuPont.

BP has set targets for cutting its greenhouse gas emissions and plans to invest \$8 billion in alternative energy sources, even as it continues hunting for and pumping oil. DuPont has already cut its emissions of greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide, by 70 percent since 1994 and has developed components for solar, wind and fuel cell energy systems.

"We think we will live in a carbon-constrained world in a matter of years," said DuPont Vice President Linda Fisher, the company's chief sustainability officer. "So we look forward to making the products that customers are going to need to live in that environment."

San Ramon's Chevron, which invests in alternative energy sources and has set targets for reducing its own emissions, scored highest among U.S. oil companies. Four of its international competitors ranked higher, however.

Exxon lost points for its former chairman's statements questioning the science behind global warming and for failing to make specific senior executives or board members responsible for climate change issues.

Both San Jose's Calpine Corp. and San Francisco's PG&E rated high among electricity producers. Sempra Energy, the parent company of San Diego Gas & Electric Co., ranked low, faulted for its consideration of building more coal-fired power plants.

The companies criticized in the report complained Tuesday that their efforts against global warming had been overlooked.

An Exxon Mobil spokesman said his company acknowledges the danger posed by greenhouse gases, tracks the corporation's own emissions and works with auto makers on more efficient engine designs.

Sempra spokesman Art Larson said his company now derives 12 percent of its power from renewable resources and has signed contracts for more. He also noted that two of the company's divisions received awards from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Tuesday for their work on energy efficiency.

"We're going to examine this report and carry on a dialogue with this organization," Larson said. "But we feel that we have walked the walk in being a responsible and environmentally sensitive corporate citizen."

#### *Corporations and climate change*

A coalition of investors and environmentalists found that corporations worldwide have begun to address global warming:

- PG&E is praised for plans to invest \$1 billion in energy-efficiency programs and for supporting government greenhouse-gas limits.
- Chevron is cited for investing in renewable energy technologies and setting targets to cut the company's own emissions.
- Calpine gets credit for running the world's largest geothermal power program and setting goals for reducing emissions.
- Exxon Mobil is criticized for not designating officials responsible for climate change policy.
- Sempra Energy loses points for weighing construction of coal-fired power plants.

Source: Ceres

### **Gov.'s Plan Divides Oil Firms**

**Schwarzenegger's initiative to reduce greenhouse gases has set off a culture clash between European and U.S. producers.**

By Marc Lifsher, Times Staff Writer  
Los Angeles Times, March 20, 2006

SACRAMENTO - Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's pledge to fight global warming has opened a rift as wide as the Atlantic Ocean between two groups of oil companies in California.

The governor's high-profile initiative, which sets firm targets to reduce the greenhouse gas pollution that contributes to global warming, is supported by BP, the London-based oil giant whose Arco gasoline is the state's biggest seller, and Royal Dutch Shell of the Hague, Netherlands, owner of the Shell brand.

U.S. companies such as Chevron Corp. of San Ramon, Calif., and Exxon Mobil Corp. of Irving, Texas, oppose the directive. In private, the Americans, who generally bristle at state intervention in the market, snidely refer to their transatlantic cousins as "the Europeans," who have adapted to a culture back home of stiff government regulation, expensive social welfare networks and heavy taxes.

The greenhouse gas clash, which is just beginning to build momentum, marks a rare dispute among the large petroleum companies that give millions of dollars a year in political contributions. The row threatens to weaken the industry's legendary unity in lobbying on air quality rules, gasoline taxes and highway funding.

"Typically the oil companies have banded together," said Bill Magavern, a legislative advocate for the Sierra Club in Sacramento. "But I think we're now seeing the beginning of a fissure that could grow larger. European companies realize that greenhouse gas is something they need to grapple with, while the American companies continue to stick their heads in the sand."

Even Joe Sparano, president of the Western States Petroleum Assn. and the oil industry's point man in Sacramento, acknowledges that global warming "is a tough issue for our industry" because "folks have different views or don't get to the same place at the same time."

The dispute comes down to whether the actions of an individual state, even one as large as California, can make a significant dent in worldwide emissions of carbon dioxide from refineries, power plants, factories and vehicles.

The foreign-owned companies contend that state action, including mandatory reporting of emissions, could ease global warming despite the absence of meaningful national or international controls. The American companies counter that actions in California would be futile if uncontrolled pollution continues in China, India and other fast-developing industrial powers.

The split in the oil companies' ranks reflects a similar disagreement in the larger business community over Schwarzenegger's plan for cutting carbon dioxide emissions beginning in 2010. His long-term goal, laid out in an executive order he signed in June, would slash carbon levels in the atmosphere to 80% below 1990 totals by 2050.

"The governor has driven a wedge between members of the business community. But the question remains, is he going to stand up" to opposition, said V. John White, director of the Center for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Technology in Sacramento.

Schwarzenegger already has begun to backpedal from recommendations in a draft report by his administration's Climate Action Team. The draft, put out for review Dec. 8, called for a gas tax of less than a penny a gallon to fund research into alternative fuels. Schwarzenegger's press secretary issued a statement saying the governor would not support any gas tax hike.

The final report, which Schwarzenegger ordered completed by Jan. 1, has been bottled up at the California Environmental Protection Agency for the last 2 1/2 months.

The Schwarzenegger administration - which touts the governor's international leadership in combating global warming - said the governor was hoping to get industry support for his state-centered program. "When there's a lack of leadership at the federal level, the governor feels it's critical that he take action," Schwarzenegger spokesman Adam Mendelsohn said.

European oil giants say they like the thrust of the draft report. A Dec. 12 letter to Schwarzenegger signed by Denise Michelson, BP's environmental policy director for California, called the recommendations "appropriately focused on ways to maximize economic and environmental benefits to Californians."

Michelson's support echoes a broader policy set by BP Chief Executive John Browne. "We can't afford to wait for the science to be completed, and nor can we wait for universal political agreement," Browne said in a speech late last year that praised efforts underway in California and "different states in the U.S.A."

BP and Shell are the only oil companies in California to join the state's voluntary registry for reporting greenhouse gas emissions. Such reporting is "a reasonable first step in supporting the governor's greenhouse gas control efforts," Shell spokesman Timothy S. O'Leary said.

Despite the upbeat talk, BP and Shell's environmental records are far from pristine. BP suffered a major crude oil spill this month at its oil fields in the North Slope of Alaska. Last month Shell was hit with a \$1.5-billion legal judgment in Nigeria over allegations that it polluted the oil-rich Niger River Delta.

BP - which advertises that it is going "Beyond Petroleum" in its quest to develop renewable energy - "is putting its money where its mouth is," said Phil Cochrane, a spokesman for BP's U.S. subsidiary. The company is committed to spending \$8 billion over the next decade on alternative-fuel projects, including a \$1-billion hydrogen-fueled electric power plant in Carson, he said.

The U.S. oil companies also are involved in developing alternative-energy projects. However, they "have great reservations about a state-only approach," Chevron spokesman Jack Coffey said. Limits on greenhouse gas emissions here would penalize California companies that are spending millions of dollars on pollution controls and energy efficiency, he said.

Chevron and other U.S. oil companies have been lobbying the Schwarzenegger administration against the global warming initiative as part of a coalition of business groups.

Despite some differences over global warming, the petroleum association's Sparano said he was hopeful that the oil industry would remain united on major issues involving gasoline prices, taxes and air quality.

For now, the split in the oil industry is more about how companies talk than how they act, Chevron's Coffey said.

"So far, everybody has stayed together to oppose things they believe won't work," he said. "I'm just not sure where everyone will come down when they get a piece of legislation or a regulation in front of them."

[Editorial, Bakersfield Californian, Wed., March 22, 2006:](#)

### **Make Mexican trucks obey state smog rules**

The state's smog fighting efforts are about to suffer a setback. Valley residents' health may pay the price. Many more Mexican trucks will soon be plying the state's freeways as a result of the North American Free Trade Agreement. Until now, they were restricted to operating inside 20 miles of the border.

The federal government is expected to eliminate the restriction soon, which will allow the trucks to haul freight anywhere.

Many of the trucks predate existing engine emission rules and won't use low-sulfur fuel for years.

Soot and other diesel exhaust components are a major source of pulmonary health problems ranging from bronchitis to lung cancer.

The Air Resources Board estimates that 17,500 Mexican trucks -- up from 3,500 now -- will spew as much as 50 more tons of smog per day.

The worst adverse impacts will be in San Diego County. In the San Joaquin Valley and Kern County eight more tons of smog may be in the San Joaquin Valley -- one of the worst air basins in the nation -- because of traffic on I-5 and Highway 99.

The smog added from the trucks must be offset by reductions from other sources, which already are carrying a huge economic and technical burden.

The federal government must help the state ensure that the trucks are fitted with the same modern air pollution and safety devices as domestic trucks have.