

## **Valley residents urged to participate in Healthy Air Living Week**

By Roxana Samano, Staff Reporter

Turlock Journal, Thursday, June 12, 2008

Businesses, organizations and individuals living in the San Joaquin Valley are being urged to participate in a week long opportunity showcasing the ways they prioritize air quality in day-to-day decisions.

Healthy Air Living Week will be celebrated July 7-13 and will focus on improving the health and quality of life for all Valley residents through efficient, effective, and entrepreneurial air quality management strategies.

"Healthy Air Living Week is designed to get people to think about what they do everyday and to put air quality at the forefront of their daily decision making," Anthony Presto, public information representative for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, said. "If everyone does this it will make a huge impact on air quality in the Valley."

According to the air district, residents of the San Joaquin Valley air basin breathe some of the most polluted air in the nation. The air basin fails to meet federal and state health-based standards for ozone and particulate matter.

Although ozone is primarily a problem in the summer, when chemicals from vehicle and other emissions cook in sunlight and heat to form smog, particulate matter occurs primarily during the fall and winter.

"Healthy Air Living Week is going to be a way for businesses to showcase what they can do all year long and for individuals to really think about what they can do all year long," Presto said. "We want as many people as possible to get out of their cars and explore alternative methods of transportation. We at the district are trying to get 100 percent rate in alternative modes of transportation that week that includes carpooling, bicycling, taking the bus and staying in at lunch time."

Employers in the Valley are also encouraged to help their employees live healthier lives.

"The first thing employers can do is request a Healthy Air Living tool kit at [www.healthyliving.com](http://www.healthyliving.com) or by e-mailing [public.education@valleyair.org](mailto:public.education@valleyair.org)," Presto said. "The main thing is to assist in the reduction of vehicle miles traveled by their employees. There are very simple ways to do this and there are ways that require a large commitment."

For more information on air quality and alternative transportation, educational activities and games, interactive discussion forums and emission calculators visit [www.healthyliving.com](http://www.healthyliving.com).

## **Visalians turn to two wheels to save on fuel costs**

### **Cyclists, bicycle-shop owners say there are few disadvantages to riding**

By Valerie Gibbons

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Thursday, June 12, 2008

Rick Ranteria has a sure-fire way to pay for the rising price of gas.

He doesn't.

Instead, the native Visalian ditched the car for a cheaper, greener mode of transportation. He rides his bike everywhere - to work, the store, across town to see friends - and aside from the hottest or windiest days of the year, he doesn't regret his choice.

"We live in such a small town there's no reason not to," he said. "It's easy to get wherever you want."

Amy Powell includes her two young daughters, 3 and 5 years old, on her 15-minute trek to work at Wilson's Cyclery on North West Street.

"They love it. We turn the trailer into a little fort and that's their own little space," she said. "It's really much easier than I thought. You just need to be aware of what's around you."

As the price of gas climbs ever skyward this summer, a small contingent of commuters is choosing to take a cheaper, though slower, way to work.

And the benefits are easy to spot. Less money spent at the pump - or the gym - and a more healthful daily routine.

### **Customers walk in, roll out**

At Sierra Bicycle Werks on East Main Street, owner Craig Peyron has been wading through a flood of bicycles dug out of garages throughout the city and brought in for repairs.

"We've had quite a few more customers," Peyron said. "It's definitely sparked a lot more interest."

Powell has also seen a steady stream of customers come into Wilson's asking about commuter bikes and equipment.

"We've definitely had a lot more people talking about it," she said.

While almost any bike will work, Powell said the most comfortable commuter bikes are the single-speed cruisers with fenders, a chain guard and a rack for groceries or soft-sided bags that are slung over the back of the bike called "panniers."

Bikes modeled after the commuter bikes used widely in Holland dominate the market, such as Electra or Batavus. They have an array of features including a guard over the back wheel for skirts and a built-in lock.

Bikes manufactured for commuting run anywhere from \$225 to \$1,000.

### **Organizing the work day**

There are three wardrobe options for bike commuters: Ride to work in work clothes, pack work clothes to work and change once at the office, or store work clothes at the office. Panniers to store work clothes for the ride sell from \$40 to \$150. Garment bags that can be mounted on the back rack of a bicycle can be harder to find, but start at \$150.

### **Be aware of the dangers**

But while commuting by bike is cheaper than driving, it can also be dangerous.

One commuter celebrating Bike to Work Week was killed on the streets of Chicago Wednesday when he crashed into an opening car door and was flung into traffic. Another bicyclist was injured during the same event when he was hit by a city bus.

In California, helmets aren't required for bicyclists, but they come highly recommended.

"Ask any emergency room nurse and they'll tell you how important a helmet is," Powell said.

Powell, Peyron and the staff at [www.commutebybike.com](http://www.commutebybike.com) recommend:

#### **Before taking off**

- Make sure your bike is tuned up.
- Plan your route, the less congested the better.
- Pack your clothing for work.
- Pack toiletries for a quick cleanup.

#### **Once out on the street**

- Wear bright clothing.
- Obey traffic signals and signs.
- Ride with traffic, never use the sidewalk.
- Ride to the left of the lane to avoid collisions with cars or opening car doors.
- Communicate with motorists, use hand signals.

"Following the laws is really important," Powell said. "You just can't predict what cars are going to do."

## **Green, from the ground up**

By Melinda Morales

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Tuesday, June 10, 2008

One of the most prevalent buzz words in the business world today is the term "green." We hear often that many business owners have the desire to go green in their projects and in their practices. But what does that mean?

A dictionary provides definitions that describe color, or something that is not quite ready for use, or even youthful inexperience.

In some ways, at least here in Tulare County, it means all three.

At its essence a green project is one that makes the best use of its resources and is designed to be highly energy efficient.

There is evidence of the greening of the county in both the public and private sectors - small steps at this point - but a growing interest that local experts say will only gain momentum and acceptance as costs come down and benefits are realized.

On the pages of ROI Sequoia Valley that follow, we will look at some of the ways innovative thinkers in Tulare County are exploring new ideas and charting new paths - green paths - to sustainability.

What do two eco-friendly credit union buildings in Bakersfield have to do with the rising tide of "green" innovation in Tulare County?

On the surface, not much. Until you look behind the buildings at the people - the designers, architects and the developer - who put it all together.

All are based right here in Tulare County.

Together, Paloma Development and the Taylor Teter Partnership built a 145,000-square-foot, \$20-million project for their client, Kern Schools Credit Union, in 2005. With its completion, they also garnered the distinction of constructing the first fully LEED-certified building in the Central Valley.

LEED, which stands for Leadership in Environmental and Energy Design, is a third-party certification program and the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high-performance green buildings. Its standards were developed by the U.S. Green Building Council in 2000.

Clay Davis, principal architect with Taylor Teter, called the LEED certification "very important."

"I think this one project pushed us out in front of the whole green-building movement in the Valley," he said.

What makes it green?

The project boasts a number of features that distinguish it as a green building by LEED standards:

- Instead of asphalt, concrete surrounds the building to reduce the "heat island" effect from the sun, thereby reducing the ambient temperatures.
- It has highly energy-efficient heating, air-conditioning and ventilation units, which includes additional coolers to cool the units themselves.
- It uses highly energy-efficient lighting.
- Larger windows on the north and east sides of the building, and smaller windows on the south and west, make the best use of light and heat.

- The roof is white to reflect sunlight and lower cooling costs.

Together the placement of the windows and the improvements to the heating and cooling system save the building's owners \$80,000 a year in heating and cooling costs, said Harvey May of Paloma Development, the project's primary developer.

The Bakersfield project may have kicked off the green movement in Tulare County, but much more is on the way.

Cities lead the way

Visalia is perhaps furthest down the path when it comes to developing and implementing green projects.

Visalia City Manager Steve Salomon said the city has been "at it" for decades with recycling programs in place for 30 years and a number of plans and projects already completed.

"Our city is denser than Fresno or Bakersfield so I think over time we have used our land more wisely under similar circumstances," he said. "The idea that we must make wise use of our resources and tread more lightly on the earth is a philosophy that makes sense to me."

Here's a brief look at a few projects, some large and some small, that Visalia has accomplished:

- In 2007 the city built two identical police sub-stations, one on the north side of town and one on the south side, made from rice-straw bales for enhanced insulation. Energy-efficient fluorescent bulbs were installed throughout. Refracting skylight tubes built into the ceilings scatter indirect sunlight, providing brilliant light during the day without producing heat like direct sunlight would. High ceilings and automatic windows in the lobby act like shafts that collect the hot air and then force it outside.
- In 2006, the city installed a solar-power system at the municipal airport.
- In 2007, the city established a new division to look after issues of conservation and the preservation of natural resources.
- This year the city commissioned a study of the Caldwell Avenue corridor between Akers Street and Ben Maddox Way that determined that synchronizing the signal lights would save 17,595 gallons of gas and 4,590 hours in driver delay. The result would prevent 2,550 pounds of carbon dioxide, 4,080 pounds of nitrogen oxides and 5,100 pounds of volatile organic compounds from being released into the air. The city is seeking a grant to cover the costs of synchronizing the lights. (See page 31).
- The Visalia Transit department replaced the lights in five of its bus shelters with solar-powered lights and has plans to eventually convert all its bus shelters to solar lighting.
- Two solar-powered public trash compactors have been placed on Main Street in downtown Visalia, one in front of Tazzaria Coffee and Tea at 208 W. Main St., and the other in the Garden Street Plaza at the intersection of Garden and Main streets.
- The city established the Vi-Cycle program that takes unclaimed bicycles, refurbishes them and then sells them to downtown businesses for use by employees and customers to reduce pollution and ease parking congestion.
- As a class project, the Visalia Chamber of Commerce's 2007-08 Sequoia Regional Leadership class has conducted free energy, water and waste assessments for 19 local businesses to help them find ways to conserve energy and resources and save money. This pilot program will lay the foundation for a permanent Green Business Program for the city.

In the private sector

Some private businesses in Visalia and Exeter have also taken steps toward becoming more energy efficient.

## GARUDA INTERNATIONAL

This Exeter company is a trendsetter in the green movement in Tulare County on two fronts.

As a green business, it finds neurtaceutical uses for agricultural waste, a commodity in almost endless supply in Tulare County.

As a green building - and this building has literally been painted green - its 10,000-square-foot office and warehouse were built to exacting LEED standards in 2007.

Its owners are currently seeking gold-level LEED certification and when completed, it will be the first LEED-certified building in Tulare County.

Features of the both literally and figuratively green building include the use of pervious concrete around the building that allows rainwater to go back into the groundwater; a sophisticated HVAC system that lets individual users control their own environments, and can shut others off completely when not in use; a floor plan that provides daylight at every workstation; and a landscape that uses edible plants, mostly medicinal herbs and culinary herbs, that the company uses in its business operation.

" I think [conservation is] something we all have to do," Garuda International president Roger Matkin said. "It's critical for the world that we start thinking this way, and it might as well start with me."

## PENINSULA PACKAGING

Another Exeter company took the lead in solar energy. In 2006, owners of Peninsula Packaging Company installed a 4,000-panel solar tracking system on 10 acres adjacent to their 24-hour plant. The system can generate about 1.1 megawatts of power and at least a third of the company's energy requirements.

## KOHL'S

The Visalia outlet became one of the first stores in this department-store chain to convert to solar power as an energy source in 2007. The system includes rows of rooftop solar panels - 2,160 in all - that generates 387 kilowatts of energy per hour.

## KAWNEER

For nearly a year, a massive solar-power system on Kawneer's 200,000-square-foot building in the Visalia Industrial Park has been generating 500,000 watts of electricity and meeting nearly all of its electricity needs. The system consists of more than 4,300 flexible, energy-generating photovoltaic laminate strips that cover the roof. The company manufactures aluminum doors, frames, storefronts and curtain walls for commercial buildings.

Costs, bureaucracy can sometimes be prohibitive

For all the reputed good that green buildings can do for the earth, and for the people who occupy them, sometimes it's not easy to go green.

The costs to secure specialized materials, or to use ecologically friendly methods of construction, can sometimes stop a project in its tracks.

Loren Aiton, an architect with the Taylor Teter Partnership that designed the Tulare city library building, and a founding member of the U.S. Green Building Council Central California Chapter, said the Tulare library project is significant in that the city council's vote in favor of it is an example of a progressive mindset.

"They have some issues with the cost, but the tradeoffs are there," he said. "

The California Energy Commission released a report earlier this year that detailed some of the obstacles businesses and developers face in attempting to meet recommended guidelines of LEED construction.

Among the obstacles cited were:

- Green construction is perceived as more costly than traditional construction.
- Energy efficiency beyond existing requirements is perceived to be unnecessary.
- Project developers are reluctant to invest in green construction because most of the benefits are long-term and may not accrue to them; building owners who lease out space are reluctant to invest beyond minimum energy codes because many of the benefits accrue to the tenants.
- Tenants have little incentive to improve a leased space, since they are in the space temporarily.
- Some building owners and managers perceive that energy efficiency measures just don't work.
- Finding the money for green construction is difficult, particularly in today's economy.

Although May and his colleagues succeeded in building the first LEED-certified building in the Valley, he is the first to admit he was dragged to the project "kicking and screaming."

"The irony of it is that the client convinced me," he said. "I told them that I had serious reservations about the project, that it would be costly, ineffective and overly bureaucratic."

May described the things his client wanted to get out of the project as common sense-based and the right things to do; things like using natural light and recycled, non-gaseous materials and construction methods that would enhance the comfort of their employees and avoid the "sick-building syndrome" often experienced by workers in other buildings.

"Those are all great things for the morale of the employees," he said.

But May was not convinced that everything green was necessarily a good idea and he recoiled against, for example, a green roof. Green roofs are those that make use of a large rooftop by planting trees, shrubs and grasses.

"As a building developer, the last thing you want on the top of a roof is more weight, water and moss," he said.

May said every item was scrutinized on a cost-benefit analysis and a number of things were thrown out when it became clear they would not provide a payback within seven years.

In all, the Kern project cost about 7 percent more to build to LEED standards than a traditional building would have, May said.

In Exeter, the LEED requirements added 10 percent to 15 percent to the costs, but Matkin said he thinks he will recover that many times over.

From a bureaucratic standpoint, May described the process as "arduous."

"We spent \$60,000 easily traceable to consultants, plus all the other time and money to document what we did," he said. "We must have killed a forest of trees to prove that we were green and I found that to be highly ironic."

Matkin said he thinks the process has been streamlined a lot even since he submitted his paperwork, but "you do have to verify everything you do," he said.

Still, he remained undeterred. From the time he broke ground on his Exeter plant, he said he wanted gold-level certification or better.

"This is a great example to set, and I wanted people to think 'If this little company can do this, I can, too.' Getting the ball rolling was more important than anything."

Looking ahead, May said he would be content to live with LEED-inspired, rather than LEED-certified, construction and forget the plaque.

"At end of the day, green building is a good idea and you will see me and others do it more and more, either by regulation or by choice, and it will become the norm," he said.

## Home Builders Association goes green

In the residential arena, green building is also becoming the norm with more builders including solar energy and upgraded heating and cooling systems as options. But within the industry, there are concerns.

"It's coming," said Bob Keenan, executive director of the Home Builders Association of Tulare/Kings Counties. "We just want it to be voluntary."

Keenan said industry leaders are concerned that in the rush to go green, cities may attempt to get ahead of the state in trying to mandate green-building requirements and create unnecessary confusion for builders and additional costs for consumers.

He said new homes are the most energy efficient homes on the market, but they represent just 1 percent of all homes and therefore have a much smaller "carbon footprint" than existing homes. A carbon footprint is a measure of the impact that activities and buildings have on the environment in terms of the amount of greenhouse gases they produce. It is measured in units of carbon dioxide.

"A new home creates 1.5 tons of carbon dioxide," Keenan said, "but existing homes create 8.5 tons. That's where the problem lies, in getting those houses to be more energy efficient."

He said the green-building movement is driving consumers to demand the highest level of energy efficiency in the belief that doing so will benefit the planet.

"And perception is reality," he said. "If the public believes it does, that will be the market."

Keenan said the HBA supports the California Green Builder program as the preferred, voluntary green-building program for its members because the program was designed by the industry and "not some committee that designs by points." He added that builders believe building to LEED standards can be very expensive.

Aiton agreed building costs and bureaucracy can be prohibitive factors in going green for business owners and developers.

"But there are no barriers from a technical standpoint; the technology is plentiful," he said.

## Education

Davis is optimistic about the future of green construction because of the new generation of architects, designers and planners entering the field today.

"I saw these [green-building principles] back in college in Berkeley, but back then it was a tough sell," he said. "I think we'll see even more changes because the younger kids that are growing into positions have some control over decisions about what goes into buildings."

Aiton said more and more university course offerings are appearing that emphasize green-building concepts.

In fact, he said, the USGBC holds a national talent and design competition for students and young professionals and sponsors educational programs at universities around the country to encourage green building.

"Schools are recognizing that these are going to be essential technical skills," he said.

## The future is green

Ten years ago, Aiton said, few people other than engineers and architects had heard of anything related to green building, and certainly there were even fewer requests from business owners to build anything sustainable.

But today's economy and an emphasis on sustainability has created an environment that is making green building a reality, especially in the Central Valley, Aiton said.

"With our air basin and a heightened level of awareness of our air quality, there is this general and growing awareness of our needs and of energy conservation in general," he said.

Today, he said, he gets inquiries from clients every day. He estimates that 5 percent of all the work Taylor Teter does is LEED-related. He expects it to grow.

"I told our partners that we're entering an economic slowdown, but for how long?," he said. "I feel that what's going to happen is that when the housing industry starts to recover, we'll see sustainable features everywhere. Why? Because major homebuilders are starting to recognize it. And when the housing market starts to turn around, we will see them talking about all their sustainable features."

Davis said the green-building movement will become even more pronounced within the next year when two ag-based processing plants in Tulare County are expected to come online with LEED-certified buildings of their own.

"What is unique is that previously activity was mostly in the public sector, but now it's catching fire across all industries," he said.

## **Big West leak subject of hearing Thursday night**

By Stacey Shepard, Californian staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Thursday, June 12, 2008

Big West of California officials will again be asked to detail their response to a recent ammonia leak in a public hearing tonight spearheaded by state Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter.

The hearing begins at 6 p.m. in the Bakersfield City Council Chambers, 1501 Truxtun Ave. It will be held before the Senate Governmental Organization Committee, which oversees emergency preparedness, and the Senate Select Committee on Air Quality.

Florez serves on both committees.

The focus will be Big West's failure to immediately notify local fire and environmental health officials about a small ammonia leak that occurred just after midnight May 18.

Fire crews did respond to the incident but only because an off-duty police officer who lives near the refinery heard the evacuation alarm and contacted the police station, according to information presented in a separate hearing on the matter held by the Kern County Board of Supervisors at the end of May.

Big West Health, Safety and Environmental Director Bill Chadick said the leak was so small - about 1/2 cup was estimated to have seeped from a leaky valve - that state guidelines didn't require notifying authorities.

Following the supervisors' hearing, Big West pledged to notify local authorities of any incident involving hazardous chemicals at the refinery, no matter how small.

Florez said the hearing stems from concerns about a proposed expansion at the refinery that would involve the use of another hazardous chemical called modified hydrofluoric acid. Florez is opposed to the chemical's use at the refinery.

In addition to Big West officials, expansion opponents, a state emergency response official and local authorities are expected to testify at tonight's hearing.

## **Las Palmas underpass proposed**

Written by John Saiz

Patterson Irrigator, Wednesday, June 11, 2008

There's a good chance East Las Palmas Avenue would delve under Patterson's railroad tracks if plans for a 7.5-square-mile industrial facility in Crows Landing go forward.

Stanislaus County CEO Rick Robinson sent a letter to the Patterson City Council on May 16 explaining the proposal. In the letter, Robinson said that if the proposed complex is built, only

three trains would be allowed to make round trips to and from the facility until the underpass is complete.

The trenching of Las Palmas is one of the latest proposals in PCCP West Park LLC's negotiations with the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors to develop the county-owned Crows Landing Air Facility and thousands of acres of surrounding farmland. They are working to turn the defunct Navy base into a massive industrial center connected to the Port of Oakland via rail.

Council members fear the trains would prevent fire trucks and ambulances, which are housed on the west side of town, from getting to the east side of town quickly. The underpass proposal is an attempt to alleviate those worries.

"We listened to the concerns of the council members," said West Park lead developer Gerry Kamilos. For some council members, the idea held promise, though they stressed developers are a long way from getting support.

Both Mayor Becky Campo and Annette Smith said they wouldn't dismiss the proposal outright, but West Park had to provide a lot of details before they signed on.

At least one member of the council had no interest in seeing an underpass come to downtown Patterson.

"If (town founder) T.W. Patterson wanted an underpass there when he thoughtfully laid out the city, he would have included one," said Councilman Dominic Farinha.

Council members also said they believe West Park never would have produced these plans if it weren't for a lawsuit the city filed against the county and West Park in May, questioning if the county was within the law going forward with West Park before an environmental review was complete.

Some of the council's other concerns include the loss of farmland, increased traffic and [air quality](#).

The details on the underpass are sparse. Officials say details will be filled in when West Park drafts an environmental impact report this year.

## **Local residents look to the sun to lighten their power bills Company offers Merced Countians eco-friendly energy alternative.**

By Dhyana Levey

Merced Sun-Star, Thursday, June 12, 2008

ATWATER -- The solar energy industry is exploding like a supernova, say supporters of this alternative.

And Merced County is getting in the loop.

Solar energy consultant Michael Gallagher is looking at about 20 potential projects in the area, with five completed in the past two months.

RECSolar, the San Luis Obispo-based company he works for out of Fresno, is known for creating Costco's solar designs and installations. But Gallagher works primarily with residential systems.

One large project took place recently at the home of Merced firefighter Brent Boyd, who lives in Atwater with his wife, Donna.

Atop their large house now sits 48 square and 18 triangular photovoltaic panels, which convert the sun that shines on them into volts of electricity.

The panels must sit on the roof or ground and face south to absorb the most sunlight.

So, why do this to your home?

Cutting energy costs is a big reason, Boyd said. His family ran up the bills with heating and air conditioning. When they moved into their new place in Atwater about a year ago, he went online to research the best alternatives.

"If you use a lot of power, go with something like this," he said.

The state and Pacific Gas and Electric support the decision to go solar.

The California Solar Initiative, signed into law in 2006, gives rebates and discounts to those who use this alternative. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger wants to create 3,000 megawatts of new, solar-produced electricity by 2017.

The goal, Gallagher said, is to clean up the environment. Solar power doesn't burn fossil fuels to generate power, so it reduces carbon dioxide emissions. It also decreases levels of nitrogen oxide air pollution that emits from other forms of energy production, according to California Solar Initiative literature.

"We're offsetting the carbon footprint," Gallagher said. "Promoting renewable energy."

So, why isn't everyone doing it? An easy answer -- the initial costs are high.

Boyd said his seven kilowatt system cost him about \$43,000 to set up. But he hopes to save about \$2,500 a year on his power bill.

Prices are customized per home, and Boyd's is a bit bigger than the average, Gallagher said. A typical five to six kilowatt system would initially cost about \$27,000 to \$33,000, he estimated.

This cost includes a \$9,000 rebate from the state. And then there's an additional incentive of about \$2,000.

Within about 10 years, the money people save from their solar power systems can cover what they paid to set it up, Gallagher said. But you have to be in a financial position to handle those initial costs.

That's why anyone considering this option should take the time to do it right.

"Take information you collect from the Internet with a grain of salt," he said. "There's a lot of misinformation out there."

Get experienced contractors -- do background checks through the Better Business Bureau and the Contractors State License Board. Always ask for references.

"It can be overwhelming," Gallagher said. "Do your research, talk to people who have had it done before. And if you can afford it -- great."

Harnessing the sun

To learn more about solar energy visit [www.gosolarcalifornia.ca.gov](http://www.gosolarcalifornia.ca.gov). For more about RECSolar's power systems, visit [www.recsolar.com](http://www.recsolar.com) or call (888) OK-SOLAR.

## **Spare the Air advisory issued for Thursday in Bay Area**

By Denis Cuff

Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Thursday, June 12, 2008

Thursday will be a Spare the Air Day when Bay Area residents are urged to minimize driving and other polluting activities because of forecasts of unhealthy smog.

Vigorous outdoor exercise should be limited to early morning hours before sunlight accelerates the conversion of car and factory exhaust into ozone, the irritant in smog, experts say.

This is the third Spare the Air Day advisory issued this year by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. Smoke from several wildfires was not a factor in the advisory, air district representatives said.

The air district is not offering free public transit on Thursday. The program, which has been cut back, will offer one more free-transit day this year, on June 19.

## Free Rides for Bay Area Commuters on June 19

### Air District, MTC Team With 30 Transit Partners as Spare the Air Program Takes New Approach

Fresno Bee, Thursday, June 12, 2008

Bay Area commuters can circle next Thursday, June 19, on their calendars and start planning a free trip on transit. June 19 is the only day this year that the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (Air District) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) will provide free rides on 30 of the region's transit systems. Transit will be free all day on Bay Area bus and light-rail systems, and until 12 noon on BART, Caltrain, Altamont Commuter Express (ACE) and Amtrak Capitol Corridor trains, and on the Golden Gate, Alameda-Oakland, Alameda-Harbor Bay and Vallejo Baylink ferries. This marks Capitol Corridor's first year of participation in the Bay Area's free transit promotion. To plan your trip on transit, go to [511.org](http://511.org), click on "Transit" and just type in your starting location and your destination.

The June 19 date for free Bay Area transit coincides with the third annual "Dump the Pump" day, a national promotion sponsored by the American Public Transportation Association to encourage the use of transit.

The Air Distr with it. Cars are the Bay Area's number one source of both air pollution and greenhouse gases, and taking transit is one of the everyday choices residents can make to improve the environment. Each gallon of gas saved by taking transit eliminates the emission of 20 pounds of carbon dioxide.

The following Bay Area transit partners are participating in the June 19 Free Transit incentive:

- AC Transit
- MUNI
- ACE
- Napa VINE
- Alameda-Harbor Bay Ferry
- American Canyon Shuttle
- Alameda-Oakland Ferry
- St. Helena Shuttle
- Air BART
- Yountville Shuttle
- BART
- Petaluma Transit
- Benicia Breeze
- Rio Vista Delta Breeze
- Caltrain
- SamTrans
- Capitol Corridor
- Santa Rosa CityBus
- Cloverdale Transit
- Sonoma County Transit
- County Connection (CCCTA)
- Tri Delta Transit
- Dumbarton Express
- Union City Transit
- Fairfield/Suisun Transit
- Vacaville City Coach
- Golden Gate Transit & Ferry
- Vallejo Transit and Baylink Ferry
- (GGBHTD)
- VTA
- Healdsburg Transit
- WestCat
- Wheels (LAVTA)
- Marin County Transit

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District (<http://www.baaqmd.gov>) is the regional agency chartered with protecting air quality in the Bay Area. For more information about Spare the Air, visit <http://www.sparetheair.org>.

## **N. Calif. wildfires forces hundreds to flee homes**

By Jordan Robertson, Associated Press Writer

In the Washington Post, Modesto Bee and other papers, Thursday, June 12, 2008

FELTON, Calif. — Firefighters struggled to gain control of a series of wind-driven wildfires burning across Northern California, including a raging forest fire that forced hundreds to flee their homes in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

The fast-moving blaze in the Bonny Doon area, about 10 miles northwest of Santa Cruz, grew to 700 acres after it broke around 3 p.m. Wednesday, and it was only 5 percent contained Thursday morning. Mandatory evacuations were ordered for 500 residents in the heavily forested hills. Voluntary evacuations were in place for another 1,000 residents.

The fire threatened hundreds of homes and could spread to as many as 1,500 acres before being brought under control, Battalion Chief Paul Van Gerwen said. Nearly 800 firefighters were at the scene Thursday morning.

The Santa Cruz fire flared just two weeks after another blaze two miles away scorched about 6 1/2 square miles and destroyed at least three dozen homes.

Jeanne Colbus, 60, said she and her 94-year-old mother quickly left their home after she saw smoke in the hills and received a call ordering them to evacuate.

"I was gardening and I looked up and saw that big column of smoke," said Colbus, who planned to spend the night at an emergency shelter at a middle school in Felton, several miles from the blaze. "I'm scared. We don't have fire insurance for one thing. A lot of our things are irreplaceable."

In Butte County, several hundred homes were evacuated ahead of a fast-growing wildfire near Chico, about 90 miles north of Sacramento. The blaze, which started around noon, had grown to 6,000 acres and threatened about 1,650 structures. It was only about 10 percent contained Thursday morning.

"We've had very active winds, low humidity and high heat. As you know, that's a recipe for disaster," said Joshpae White, a spokesman for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Those weather conditions also prevailed throughout the rest of Northern California, where hundreds of firefighters were deployed on fire lines from the North Coast wine country to the Central Valley.

The state's largest blaze, in the Los Padres National Forest, had grown to 16,905 acres and was only 16 percent contained.

Three firefighters were burned near Lincoln, about 25 miles northeast of Sacramento, when they were caught in a 65-acre grass fire burning in a dry rice field. Two of them had moderate to severe burns to their faces and arms, while the third was treated for minor facial burns.

The extreme fire danger was expected to last through Thursday, with temperatures hitting 100 degrees throughout the Central Valley. Felix Garcia, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Sacramento, said winds are expected to decrease, which would help the firefighting efforts.

In Colorado, a federal fire management team was expected to arrive Thursday to coordinate more than 50 firefighters battling a lightning-sparked blaze at a remote U.S. Army training site about 160 miles south of Denver. The fire had burned about 20,000 acres, or about 31 square miles, inside Fort Carson's Pinon Canyon Maneuver Site, spokeswoman Karen Linne said.

Across the country in North Carolina, fire officials said [air quality](#) from Raleigh to Winston-Salem could be affected Thursday by smoke from a wildfire burning in and around the Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

About 50 homes were ordered evacuated because of the 62-square-mile wildfire, officials said

## **Developer plans high-tech complex in East Palo Alto, dubbed "Bay Business Park"**

By Banks Albach - Palo Alto Daily News  
Tri-Valley Herald, Wednesday, June 11, 2008

Plans for a new business complex geared toward high-tech and biotech startups are moving forward in East Palo Alto.

Developer Tig Tarlton, who created the 900,000-square-foot Menlo Business Park, is seeking to build about 90,000 square feet of research, business development and administrative space on a 5-acre lot at 2519 Pulgas Ave., near Bay Road.

The East Palo Alto Planning Commission was set to review and approve the project's environmental review Monday night, but the staff report arrived too late for each commissioner to review it thoroughly. The commission tabled the vote until its next meeting.

Most of the site is vacant and surrounded by industrial properties. There are two warehouses and a single-family home on the southeast section of the land. The developer plans to demolish the existing structures.

Tarlton's son, John, told the commission that he expects the new complex, dubbed Bay Business Park I, to attract startup companies that are in the research phase, rather than full-scale production. He said an average tenant likely will take up between 3,000 and 10,000 square feet.

"Over the last 25 years, we've learned how to build research facilities that will attract," said John Tarlton.

The Tarltons are hopeful the commission agrees with their preliminary findings on environmental impacts that conclude the project will have a negligible effect on traffic, noise, air quality and storm drainage.

The proposed building is just 30 feet high and won't house companies in production, meaning few hazardous materials will be handled at the site, John Tarlton said.

Commission Vice Chairman Carlos Romero said the new complex could be the start of a new trend in East Palo Alto.

"In a way, you're the first one on the block, and that's good for you," Romero told John Tarlton.

"But we need to think about what we are bringing to the community."

The Planning Commission meets next June 23, when commissioners will take up the project's environmental review and architectural supervision. A "yes" vote on both items would forward the project to the City Council for a review.

## **Air quality settlements in Maricopa County**

Arizona Central, Thursday, June 12, 2008

Since October 2006, Maricopa County's Air Quality Department has made 1,380 settlements. Fifty-eight percent of air quality violations were related to dust control. About a third were related to air quality permit issues.

Search the settlements by location, type of pollution, business name and settlement amount. Click on "Details" to get a more detailed report on a specific settlement. If you leave the "Business" box blank, after your initial search results you may sort alphabetically and numerically by clicking on the column headers.

For more information on a settlement, contact the Maricopa County Air Quality Department at (602) 506-6010 or [maricopa.gov](http://maricopa.gov).

Updated through May 2008\*

[Fresno Bee Editorial, Thursday, June 12, 2008:](#)

## Climate change - wait 'til next year?

There are two ways to read the U.S. Senate's defeat of a climate change bill. It was a wholesale dodge of global warming - or it was a bruising prelim in a fight that may bring environmental change next year.

Both takeaway messages are on target. No one expected the Senate to do much more than bloviate, ridicule and harangue the package to death. Republicans invoked \$4-a-gallon gas to stir fears about the controls and even had a tag-team of clerks read the 492-page bill into the record for hours to wear down the backers.

It worked, at least for now. California Democrat Barbara Boxer, the floor manager for the package, noted that a combination of Democrats and breakaway Republicans fell short of the 60 votes needed to block a filibuster, though there were still enough to put the measure past a 50 vote majority. That's a milestone.

Final success, she suggested, must wait for a new administration, with presumptive nominees in both parties favoring an escalating limit on carbon emissions by midcentury. President Bush's threatened veto of the measure dampened chances this year. Also consider this: The debate has moved beyond global-warming denial, a caveman argument that no senator attempted to make in this past week.

The future fight may be a question of degree, not substance. Missing from this debate were serious talks about how fast and with what inducements the nation will curb its emissions. There are significant hurdles to negotiate such as a possible tariff on goods produced in nations without serious climate-change controls such as China, Brazil or Mexico, all major trading partners.

The seriousness of this package can't be denied. It's sponsored by Senators Joe Lieberman, the Connecticut independent, and John Warner, an old-guard Republican from Virginia, along with Boxer, who steered the package from its starting point on a key committee she heads.

This bipartisan support will be needed because the scale of the bill. It proposes to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, chiefly carbon dioxide given off coal-fire power plants, refineries and factories, by 18 percent by 2020 and nearly 70 percent by 2050. Industry would pay fees to emit greenhouse gases with the money going to develop green technology.

This shift is necessary, but it won't be painless. Foes of the plan predicted high gas and energy prices and hardship for industries caught in the changeover. The bill offers hefty tax breaks to soften the blow, a feature that its critics used as further evidence of its complexity and cost.

Give the bill's sponsors a bad-timing award for pushing the plan amid record-high energy prices. But time is not on our side with this issue. Each year, we wait will increase the damage to the planet and compound the complexity and cost of future efforts to slow climate change.

[San Francisco Chronicle, Commentary, Thursday, June 12, 2008:](#)

### **San Francisco should lead the way - build green**

Dan Geiger, Margie O'Driscoll

Green is the New Black," proclaimed an ad in the Sunday, June 8, Chronicle. As Bay Area residents green their lifestyles, switching from Hummers to hybrids, cities like San Francisco are increasingly seeking holistic approaches to reducing our polluting greenhouse gas emissions.

Buildings are the lifeblood of any city - we spend 90 percent of our time in buildings. Design and construction decisions made today will be with us for decades, affecting our children and our children's children.

Given today's environmental crises, it's important to understand that buildings are responsible for 39 percent of total carbon emissions and 12 percent of water use. Green buildings - that is, buildings designed, built and operated to high environmental and health standards - reduce electricity and water consumption by 25 to 50 percent. Do we want healthy and energy-efficient buildings? Most San Franciscans would say yes, of course.

The City of San Francisco seeks to lead the way to do this with proposed legislation from the Mayor's Green Building Task Force. This ordinance recommends green building requirements that will limit the sum of all greenhouse-gas emissions, what is referred to as the carbon footprint, of new and renovated buildings, promote the health of occupants and strengthen San Francisco's economy.

So many San Franciscans were surprised by a report from the Office of the Controller that asserts that green building requirements would result in significantly higher costs to San Francisco's businesses and economy, especially because the task force is made up of representatives of business and industry. We strongly dispute this assertion.

There is much evidence to the contrary. For example, a recent study by Davis Langdon, a London consulting firm that provides building engineering and cost analysis, "Cost of Green Revisited," concludes: "There is no significant difference in average costs for green buildings as compared to non-green buildings."

Also absent from the San Francisco controller's report were important considerations: Green buildings result in dramatic operational cost savings over their life span, and significant increases in worker health and productivity. Indeed, one of the primary reasons companies are embracing U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standard is to attract top talent - people want to work in healthy, pleasant and sustainable environments. Such gains in worker productivity will contribute substantially to San Francisco's economy.

Instead, the report proposes a carbon tax, which ignores the many other benefits of green building beyond reducing carbon emissions and water use.

Building owners see LEED buildings as an investment to enhance value, rather than a cost. For instance, Adobe, Inc., which has four LEED-certified buildings that scored platinum ratings under the LEED point system, realized a 121 percent return on investment on its green building projects. Major real estate investment firms are mandating LEED requirements for their projects and insurance companies offer discounts for LEED buildings.

San Francisco could lose its competitive business advantages if it fails to take strong action to promote green building. As leaders of organizations based in San Francisco, we challenge our elected officials to "walk the talk" in creating a more sustainable built environment, not just for today's residents and visitors, but the generations to come.

*Dan Geiger is the executive director of the U.S. Green Building Council - Northern California Chapter, and Margie O'Driscoll is the executive director of the American Institute of Architects - San Francisco.*

[Los Angeles Times, Letter to the Editor, Thursday, June 12, 2008:](#)

### **Too wide a brush on air pollution**

*Re "AQMD goes after paint fumes," June 7*

The Times' story is somewhat misleading in saying that paints "are the single largest source of such emissions within the district." According to the South Coast Air Quality Management District's emissions inventory, gas stations emit 27 tons a day. Paints are a prime target only because they come under the district's limited authority. Consumer products emit 104 tons a day (4.5 times as much as paint) but are regulated at the state level. Motor vehicles and other mobile sources are regulated jointly by state and federal agencies.

In any case, the new rule does not go after "paint fumes" -- it has no effect on emissions. Instead, the rule goes after money that would otherwise be used to keep people in jobs during these tough economic times.

*Robert Wendoll, Los Angeles*

*The writer is director of environmental affairs for the Dunn-Edwards Corp.*

[Letter to LA Daily News, Thursday, June 12, 2008:](#)

## No easy fix for pollution

Thank you for your editorial Monday titled "Truckers, pull aside," which closed with an admonition: "The trucking industry should either help with the diesel cleanup, or get out of the way." However, your editorial displays wishful thinking and an ongoing naivete.

The American Trucking Association and its allies have resisted cleaning up diesel pollution every step of the way, unless they are forced, and then they contend they were always for it.

When Long Beach broke with Los Angeles and came up with its own diesel cleanup plan, you published an editorial commending Long Beach and Mayor Bob Foster because they would clean the air while avoiding litigation. They were wrong and naive and so were you.

You mention in your editorial that the ATA and its allies are turning "deregulation into a dirty word." Yes, they are, and they have been for nearly 20 years. Deregulation has been and is continuing to be used to escape responsibility. By not owning the trucks, the companies are avoiding responsibility for the pollution. By giving their drivers 1099 forms and not paychecks, they are avoiding responsibility for the drivers and how the work gets done. That is why the employee provision in the Port of Los Angeles' plan is so important.

Pollution at the port is driven by economics. Once the economics change and the polluters are forced to take responsibility, the emissions will go down and the quality of our lives will go up.

*David Greene, San Pedro*

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses a group of seven scientists have donated a total of 1 million dollars towards research against air pollution, which contributes to global warming. They are now asking the public for their financial support in donating funds to match the million dollars. For more information on this Spanish clip, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

### **Científicos piden aportaciones públicas contra la contaminación**

Manuel Ocaño, Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Thursday, June 12, 2008

Un grupo de siete científicos reunió un millón de dólares de sus recursos personales para donativo en investigaciones contra la contaminación del aire que crea el sobrecalentamiento terrestre.

Ahora los donantes, de la Unión de Científicos Preocupados por el medio ambiente soliscita que el público aporte una cantidad similar, que serviría tanto para avanzar investigaciones como para cabildear con legisladores federales.

El referido grupo reúne a por lo menos diez mil científicos estadounidenses comprometidos en la lucha contra las emisiones y la contaminación que sobrecalientan la tierra.

La organización opera desde Berkeley, California.