

Wind could help fire fight

Crews hope for clear air as they battle blaze in Mariposa County.

By Charles McCarthy and Hannah Franklin / The Fresno Bee

Friday, June 27, 2008

Shifting winds today may give firefighters a chance to get better control of a smoky fire that has scorched 2,200 acres of woodland and endangered about 200 homes in southern Mariposa County.

Mild wind and weather conditions have stabilized the Oliver fire over the past two days, but 12 homes remain under evacuation order in the Ponderosa Basin community.

Smoke from the lightning-sparked flames remained too thick for water-tanker airplanes to approach.

Winds today are expected to blow the smoke out of the way -- but also could cause the fire to burn more aggressively toward more homes in the area.

"We are hoping to button this up before we see a significant wind change," said Craig Tolmie, Cal Fire spokesman.

The Oliver fire is one of hundreds of fires started by dry lightning storms across Northern California last weekend.

In the Sierra National Forest, 991 acres have burned, said spokeswoman Sue Exline.

The fires have created a haze across the region. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District said the air-quality index will be at "unhealthy" or "very unhealthy" levels in its eight counties today and Saturday.

"We are surrounded by fires in the Valley, so even if the wind direction does change, it might just blow a different kind of smoke our way," said Janelle Schneider, air district spokeswoman.

There is a 20% chance of more dry lightning thunderstorms in Mariposa County today and Saturday, according to the National Weather Service.

Along a small drive called Varden Court just off Chowchilla Mountain Road, residents have been warned that they might need to evacuate. But they relaxed a bit Thursday as the fire just across from their homes looked less menacing with each helicopter dousing.

"Now they're going the other way," Nancy Soden, 69, said of the flames.

She and her husband, Bill, were ready to leave the home they'd occupied for the past 31 years. Medications, personal papers, keepsakes and essential belongings had been packed into a motor home.

A fire engine and firefighters from as far away as Imperial County were parked in nearly every home's driveway.

"We're here for a week," Imperial County Fire Department Capt. Ernesto Celis said.

A neighbor, former Mariposa Unified school board member Bob Bartholomew, 67, recalled that "little bitty" plumes of smoke and flame were visible on the mountain above the neighborhood right after the weekend lightning strikes. When night fell, the whole slope was aglow.

"It looks so much better," Bartholomew said Thursday about the danger.

"And it is so fantastic to have some of these people in our driveways."

Little more than a city block closer to the fire, homes along Aurora Road were among the 12 under a mandatory evacuation order.

Five helicopters continued dumping water on hot spots near the homes. These included two huge crane copters that carry 2,000 gallons on each trip between a large pond and the fire line.

Tolmie of Cal Fire said the flames are moving both to the north into the unpopulated portion of the Sierra National Forest and southward toward the homes.

More than 1,800 ground firefighters -- with 136 fire engines, eight water-tenders and 13 bulldozers -- continued their battle.

"Right now the majority of our effort is going into securing the fire lines on the southern portion of the fire near those structures," Tolmie said.

On Thursday, 100 firefighters from the Midwest arrived in Fresno to help aid local firefighters in the Sierra National Forest.

Forestry officials reported that the Westfall, Gagg, Poison, Silver Knob, and Chiquito fires and seven other fires in the national forest have been contained.

The Star fire is not yet contained.

Crews still battling fire in Mariposa County

Homes endangered and wind shift could pose a problem.

By CHARLES McCARTHY and HANNAH FRANKLIN, The Fresno Bee

In the Merced Sun-Star, Friday, June 27, 2008

Shifting winds today may give firefighters a chance to beat a smoky fire that has scorched more than 2,000 acres of woodland and endangered some 200 homes in southern Mariposa County.

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The Oliver fire is one of hundreds of fires started by dry lightning storms across Northern California last weekend. In the Sierra National Forest, 991 acres have burned, said spokeswoman Sue Exline.

The fires have created a haze across the region. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District said the air-quality index will be at "unhealthy" or "very unhealthy" levels in its eight counties today and Saturday. An air quality index reading of 185 is forecast for today in Merced County, which is considered unhealthy.

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Officials said they hope to have the fires fully contained by Monday.

Bad air to stay for now

Air quality unhealthy; likely to stay poor as long as wildfires burn

BY KIMBERLINA ROCHA

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Friday, June 27, 2008

Air quality will remain in the "unhealthy" range this weekend and possibly next week, as hundreds of California wildfires continue to pump ash into the air.

"Conditions will remain the same until the fires are extinguished," said Anthony Presto of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

And that may be a while. Firefighters in some areas are saying that some of the blazes, in difficult-to-get-to areas, could be allowed to burn for weeks.

The combination of particulate matter and ozone pollution is causing the air quality to be unhealthy for everyone, Presto said.

"If you see or smell smoke, most likely it's affecting your lungs," he said.

Tulare County health officials advised everyone, especially those with lung and heart ailments, to take precautions. Residents should limit their time outside and make sure air conditioners are circulating properly.

Those who may not have been diagnosed with lung or heart disease may experience problems during smoky conditions. Symptoms include tightness of the chest, chest pain, shortness of breath and sudden, overwhelming fatigue, health officials said.

Check for updates on the current air status by visiting the Air District's Web site at www.valleyair.org.

Myriad wildfires pollute air, pose health risks and keep on spreading

by Demian Bulwa, staff writer
S.F. Chronicle, Friday, June 27, 2008

SAN FRANCISCO -- Bay Area residents can expect to remain mired in a smoky haze this weekend as nearly 1,100 wildfires chew up 250 square miles of land around Northern California. For those most sensitive, the foul air could pose health risks, pollution regulators and meteorologists said Thursday.

Temperatures are expected to top out in the 80s and even the 90s in hot spots like Livermore, which would make for great summer weather, "if only you could breathe," said Diana Henderson, a National Weather Service forecaster.

Existing fires continued to spread Thursday, even as new fires were discovered. And state and federal fire officials said they were preparing for the return of the same dry thunderstorms that sparked most of the recent blazes. The storms were expected to bring lightning strikes starting late Thursday and continuing through the weekend.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District said it expects pollution levels to remain unhealthy today in portions of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, Solano and Sonoma counties. People who are very young or old, or suffer from lung or heart disease, are most at risk.

Of particular concern, said agency spokesman Aaron Richardson, are smoke particles smaller than 1/20th of the diameter of a human hair that are not filtered out of the body by the nose or throat, and may pass into the bloodstream.

Concern about polluted air was one reason why organizers canceled Saturday's 100-mile Western States Endurance Run. The famous footrace from Squaw Valley to Auburn was scrapped for the first time in its 35-year history because of the "health risks that have been associated with these wildfires," race officials said in a statement.

As of Thursday afternoon, officials had identified 1,088 fires in Northern California that covered 159,000 acres and destroyed at least 18 homes. More than 12,500 state and federal firefighters were on the job, with 68 helicopters and 14 airplanes dropping water and retardant liquid. Closures were in place on Highways 32, 36, 70, 89 and 96 and 299.

One of the smokiest fires continued to grow in Lake and Colusa counties. The Walker Fire was just 10 percent contained and had the potential to shut down Highway 20 and burn more than 30,000 acres - or nearly 50 square miles - as it moved north through steep and rugged terrain, the state's firefighting agency said.

The Walker Fire had not destroyed any homes in the remote area, and the popular Wilbur Hot Springs resort that was evacuated was spared, said Roger Archey, a spokesman for the state Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. On Thursday, he said, the two-lane Highway 20 remained open, but was crowded with emergency vehicles and choked with smoke from the blaze.

As of Thursday morning, Archey said, nearly 600 firefighters had reported to the blaze, using five helicopters to drop water and 21 bulldozers to carve out wide perimeter lines, attempting to stop

the fire's advance. The cause remained under investigation, though it was reported earlier as lightning.

"It's really gnarly country, a lot of brush and chaparral and steep terrain," Archey said. "There are fast-burning fuel types that are problematic, obviously."

Another major concern was the Eagle Fire in Shasta-Trinity National Forest, which jumped Highway 299 on Wednesday and prompted the closure of a stretch of the roadway as well as evacuations near Junction City.

In Monterey County, both directions of Highway 1 south of Big Sur remained closed in a 12-mile stretch because of what is now known as the Basin Complex of fires in Los Padres National Forest. The highway is likely to stay shut for several more days, according to Caltrans.

The possibility of the flames traveling about a mile west and reaching Big Sur lessened Thursday, though the combined fires had burned 24,000 acres and are only 3 percent contained, a U.S. Forest Service spokesman said.

The fire, which has destroyed 16 homes, is considered to be in the southern part of California and is thus not included in the damage report for Northern California.

Air quality officials extend health advisory

In the Fresno Bee, Modesto Bee, S.F. Chronicle and other papers, Friday, June 27, 2008

San Francisco, CA (AP) --Another day of smoke-filled skies is prompting air quality officials to extend a health advisory for the Bay Area.

Officials with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District say because of smoke from wildfires burning in the region, the air throughout much of the nine counties in the Bay Area region is expected to reach unhealthy levels again Friday.

With air quality gauges recording elevated levels of particulate matter, officials are advising people to take steps to reduce their exposure, including limiting outdoor activities.

People with asthma or lung disease are advised to follow their doctor's directions.

Elderly people and children are also considered susceptible to elevated air pollution levels.

The National Weather Service is predicting widespread haze and smoke will remain in the skies through at least Saturday night.

News & Notes

Air 'unhealthy' today

Modesto Bee, Friday, June 27, 2008

People are still advised to limit their outdoor activity today, because of air pollution caused by wildfires in areas ringing the San Joaquin Valley. For the fourth consecutive day, an unhealthy air quality forecast is in effect in Stanislaus, San Joaquin and Merced counties. The mixture of ozone and particle pollution can aggravate heart and lung disease, cause asthma attacks and increase the risk of respiratory infections. The air pollution has prompted regional emergency services officials to monitor ambulance dispatches, but there has been no increase in calls for breathing problems, chest pains or other acute health problems. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has a daily air quality forecast online at www.valleyair.org/aqinfo/forecast.htm.

Another smoke advisory for Bay Area

By Denis Cuff and Johnathan Lockett
Contra Costa Times, Thursday, June 26, 2008

Air pollution regulators are advising Bay Area residents again today to limit outdoor exercise because of the wildfire smoke that continues to blanket much of Northern California and Nevada.

Forecasters said they still can't say when the smoke will disperse, and a chance of dry lightning strikes in the hills and mountains of Northern California today and this weekend could ignite more wildfires like the ones that started last weekend.

"We are concerned about the chance of lightning," said Ralph Boorman, a spokesman for the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. "The smoke is lingering, and we can't say when we will get relief."

The air district forecast air quality today as "unhealthy for people sensitive to pollution" in the East Bay and North Bay in an area stretching from Livermore, Walnut Creek and Brentwood through Benicia, Vallejo, Fairfield and through much of Napa, Marin and Sonoma counties.

Even healthy people in those areas are advised to limit prolonged exertion outdoors.

"We're asking people to exercise caution in limiting their exposure to the smoky air," Boorman said.

In the rest of the Bay Area, where air quality is forecast to be "moderate" today, people sensitive to air pollution are advised to limit outdoor exercise.

Despite forecasts of unhealthy air for Thursday, several people were exercising outdoors at Heather Farm Park in Walnut Creek. Most said the smoke bothered them.

Nick Sanchez, 19, and Max Alonso, 18, did a few tricks on their skateboards before finding it harder to breathe.

"I didn't know it was going to be this bad," Sanchez said Thursday afternoon at the park skateboard area. "It's gotten worse over the last few days."

Leanna Stealman of Walnut Creek has asthma, but opted Thursday to take her 6-year-old son, Robert, to the skateboard park.

"I feel like I know it's not good," she said, "but at the same time, it's not good for a 6-year-old to be sitting in the house all day."

Mike Druding, 59, of Antioch said he could not resist the opportunity to play doubles tennis on a warm day.

"We're tennis rats," Druding said. "I thought about not playing, but it's more important to play."

Weekend weather threatens to spread California wildfires

By William M. Welch, USA TODAY

LOS ANGELES — Firefighters battling more than a thousand wildfires across Northern California are bracing for weekend winds and lightning that threaten to spread the blazes, touch off new ones and force evacuations.

More than 12,500 firefighters were battling 1,088 fires across Northern California by late Thursday. The number of fires and acreage was growing so quickly that California state fire officials were hard pressed to keep their tallies up to date. Fewer than one-quarter of the fires had been contained.

"It is increasing almost hourly," said Carol Jolley of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, or CalFire. "We have so many fires ... there's a logistical problem just getting to them."

Nearly 159,000 acres had been consumed by the fires. Smoke and soot created poor air quality across much of Northern California and adjoining Nevada.

A 100-mile endurance foot race through the mountains of Northern California was canceled because of the fires and air pollution.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger visited Monterey County to see the damage. He said he was calling in National Guard troops to help fight the fires.

One fast-growing lightning-sparked fire was at the Pacific Coast community of Big Sur.

About 500 homes were threatened and 16 destroyed, fire spokesman Curtis Vincent said. State and U.S. Forest Service officials counted 38 homes and other buildings destroyed in all the Northern California fires.

Weather forecasters said the threat of rainless thunderstorms with the potential for fire-sparking lightning will increase over the weekend across parts of Northern California and southern Oregon.

"The greatest threat for dry storms will be over the northern and central Sierras on Saturday and Sunday," said David Imy, a meteorologist with the Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Okla.

Last weekend, an unusual amount of lightning sparked hundreds of wildfires across California. "This looks like it could be like last weekend's storms," Imy said.

Steve Kliest, information officer with a U.S. Forest Service team working with California fire officials, said the forecast was discouraging for the nearly 300 ground crews working around the clock.

"As if the news wasn't bad enough. That's a real serious concern," he said. Lightning can set off new fires that render useless the lines of cleared brush that crews dig to contain fires, he said.

Residents were ordered to evacuate homes in parts of Butte, Shasta and Trinity counties, according to the joint state-federal fire information center. Voluntary evacuations were advised in parts of several more counties.

State highways and local roads were closed in parts throughout the northern part of the state because of the fires.

Firefighters got one break Thursday when visibility improved, allowing the use of air tankers.

Suzanne Brady, an information officer with CalFire, said 14 air tankers and 68 helicopters helped fight fires.

The smoke was so thick that some fires in remote areas weren't immediately discovered, Jolley said. In Butte County, she said, firefighters first learned of one fire from infrared equipment from an airplane after the fire had consumed 2,500 acres.

Another big concern was the wind. Kliest said winds drove the Big Sur fire toward a larger complex of fires due east in the Los Padres National Forest. By Thursday afternoon, they were no more than 4 or 5 miles apart, he said.

"It's just a matter of time (before they meet)," he said. "We can't stop it from coming to the other fire. ... It's going to leave an awfully big footprint in that area."

The rugged terrain made it difficult for ground crews to dig lines of containment, he said.

Smoke created hazy, polluted air across much of the northern and central parts of the state as well as Nevada.

"I've been working for this agency for 22 years, and I've never seen a level of pollution this high," said Andy Goodrich, director of the Air Quality Management Division of the Washoe District Health Department in Reno.

In Reno, air pollution was at its worst Wednesday, and Goodrich's division declared a "Stage Two" alert, which meant that everyone, not just people with respiratory conditions, was urged to limit outdoor activities and stay indoors, he said. Thursday, the alert was reduced to a "Stage One," he said, but the pollution was still considered "unhealthy for everyone."

Goodrich says the plume of smoke and pollution from the California fires extends into the Midwest.

The pollution has stagnated since Monday at levels from two to 10 times the federal standard for clean air, says Dimitri Stanich, spokesman for the California Air Resources Board.

In the Sacramento region, officials have not seen air pollution levels this high in more than a decade, says Christina Ragsdale, spokeswoman for the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District. "We've got more than 1,000 fires burning," she says. "No matter what direction the wind is blowing, we're going to be getting some smoke from the fires."

Organizers of the Western States 100-Mile Endurance Run, which was to take place this weekend on a rugged Sierra course, canceled the event because of health risks related to air pollution. It was the first cancellation in the event's 35-year history.

"Holding this year's race would pose too great a risk to our runners," Tim Twietmeyer and Greg Soderlund said in announcing the cancellation.

Contributing: Emily Bazar and Doyle Rice in McLean, Va.; Associated Press.

Smoke spreads through Central Valley; more storms for the Midwest

USA Today, Friday, June 27, 2008

California wildfires -- Air quality is forecast to be unhealthy (code red) for parts of California's Central Valley. While firefighting efforts continue, Mother Nature will not be of much assistance. Widespread rainfall is not expected west of the Rockies through the weekend. Isolated storms that do pop up from Northern California through the northern Sierra and into southern Oregon could produce dry lightning and increase the wildfire threat, particularly on Saturday.

Severe thunderstorm threat -- A front draped from east to west from the eastern Great Lakes through the northern Plains will provide the focus for thunderstorm development today. Already this morning, thunderstorms are rumbling through parts of Missouri, eastern South Dakota, southwestern Minnesota and northwestern Iowa. A severe thunderstorm watch is in effect through 1 p.m. CT for southeastern South Dakota, far southwestern Minnesota, northeastern Nebraska and western and central Iowa. Showers and storms also stretch from New York

through West Virginia. There will be a large area at a slight risk for severe thunderstorms this afternoon and this evening stretching from the Northeast through the northern High Plains.

Midwest flooding -- Heavy rainfall in northeastern Missouri and far western Illinois overnight has again raised the threat for flash flooding. The thunderstorms in the Midwest may result in additional spots of excessive rainfall today. Two inches or more of rainfall will be possible across northern Iowa into southern Minnesota. A flash flood watch is in effect for parts of central and eastern Iowa this afternoon and this evening.

As for river flooding, the additional rainfall today is only expected to slow declines in river levels and is not expected to create rises for most streams and rivers that have recently been experiencing flooding. However, rivers will be closely monitored due to the threat of additional rainfall through the end of the week and over the weekend. At time of writing, 23 gauges remain in major flood.

Bad air day -- In addition to the air quality concerns in California due to wildfires, ozone concentrations will be on the rise as warmer air spreads into the Mid-Atlantic. Air quality is forecast to be code orange (unhealthy for sensitive groups) through much of the Mid-Atlantic, including Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Raleigh-Durham, Baltimore and Philadelphia.

Q: What do high ozone levels mean for asthma sufferers?

By Bob Swanson and Doyle Rice

USA Today, Tuesday, June 24, 2008

A: Ozone harms all people's lungs, weakening their ability to fight disease as well as increasing the frequency and severity of asthma. According to Dr. Daniel Weber, ozone increases the lesions of lungs' alveoli, which are the small sacs where oxygen and carbon dioxide are exchanged and directly relates to asthma.

WebMD has a good video on ways asthmatics deal with ozone and why it affects them. The EPA also has an informative brochure about "Ozone and Your Health."

You can find out the daily ozone level and forecast for your local area, or anywhere nationally, using www.airnow.gov.

This question was submitted by reader Gayla Northam and was answered by Paige Dearing of the USA TODAY weather staff.

Placer issues air quality alert, cautions against outdoor exercise

By Jennifer K. Morita

Sacramento Bee, Thursday, June 26, 2008

Smoky conditions caused by fires burning throughout Northern California have prompted Placer County officials to issue an air quality advisory today, cautioning residents to curtail all outdoor exercise.

Measures of particulates taken Wednesday showed Roseville averaged 78 micrograms per cubic meter, more than twice the federal standard of 35 micrograms, according to a Placer County Health Department press release. Auburn showed more than four times the federal standard at 151 micrograms per cubic meter.

Fine particles associated with smoke can cause a variety of health problems, including coughing, eye and throat irritation, and can heighten symptoms for people suffering from heart and lung disease or asthma.

Placer County Air Pollution Control Officer Tom Christofk and county Health Officer Richard Burton offer the following recommendations for smoky conditions:

- Healthy people should avoid strenuous outdoor exercise.
- Children and elderly people should avoid outdoor activities.
- People with respiratory problems should remain indoors.
- Using paper mask filters is not recommended because it can restrict airflow.
- Stay inside with doors and windows shut, using the recycle or recirculate mode on air conditioners in your car and home.
- Avoid cooking and vacuuming because these activities can increase indoor pollutants.
- Drink lots of water to keep airways moist. Breathing through a warm, wet washcloth also can help relieve dryness.

Board outlines plans to whip greenhouse gases

By Mathew Yi, Sacramento bureau
S.F. Chronicle, Friday, June 27, 2008

Sacramento -- California's air board unveiled the nation's most ambitious plan Thursday to require cleaner cars and fuels, energy-efficient buildings and more electricity from the sun and wind to cut greenhouse gases in the state.

The 77-page draft plan, the first major step in implementing landmark legislation that requires the state to cut carbon dioxide emissions by 30 percent by 2020, was embraced in varying degrees by environmentalists and industry officials at a hearing in Sacramento.

In the coming months, the 11-member California Air Resources Board will fill in the details and finalize the document, which must be approved by Jan. 1.

While the so-called "scoping plan" contained some preliminary recommendations, they did not include exactly how those ideas could be carried out.

The air board also wants to create a market system with other Western states and Canadian provinces to create a carbon-credit trading market for heavy polluters, giving them the option of either cutting emissions or buying credits.

The plan also encourages local governments to take part in limiting emissions and asks large dairy farms to capture methane gases.

While the draft proposal is sweeping, the plan "also leaves many questions to be answered," air board Chairwoman Mary Nichols said Wednesday during a public hearing on the draft plan.

Two dozen representatives of groups that ranged from the Sierra Club to the Western States Petroleum Association attended a hearing on the report, with most of them saying they support much of the draft plan.

Catherine Reheis-Boyd, a lobbyist for the petroleum association, said she hopes the air board will put a premium on innovations that can be brought to market in cost-effective ways.

"That will be the biggest challenge that we have," she told the air board.

The economic impact of carrying out the plan was not included in the draft proposal. The air board will release that report later this summer.

Bruce McLaughlin, an attorney who represents the state's municipal utilities, said his group is encouraged that the plan includes a market system to trade carbon credits. But he's concerned that utilities could face an undue financial burden if they are required to bid for the carbon credits.

Environmental groups were largely enthusiastic on Thursday about the draft plan.

"Today's draft has the potential to be the premier greenhouse gas reduction effort in the country," said Bill Magavern, director of Sierra Club California.

Derek Walker, director of the Environmental Defense Fund's California Climate Initiative, said he is encouraged that the draft plan addresses a wide variety of ways to reducing greenhouse gases.

"The beauty is that it uses all of the tools in the toolbox to fight global warming," he said.

Still, environmental groups had their share of concerns, mostly around the carbon-credit trading system. According to the draft plan, industries could get an initial batch of carbon credits for free before they would be auctioned off.

"It leaves a door open for giving free permits to pollutants," said Jason Barbose, Environment California's global warming advocate. "It would simply be a corporate giveaway."

But Nichols said awarding some credits for free at the start may be required to help jump-start such a market system. She added that everyone living, working and doing business in California will have to engage in many efforts to reduce emissions if the state hopes to meet its 2020 goals.

"The reality of our situation is that there is no single, simple answer," Nichols said.

State to add items it regulates for smog

By Ngoc Nguyen

Sacramento Bee, Friday, June 27, 2008

Smog-forming emissions from household items like cleaners and dryer sheets are projected to surpass those from passenger cars statewide by 2020, prompting the Air Resources Board today to expand the list of consumer products it regulates as sources of smog.

The board already regulates more than 100 product categories, from deodorant to perfume, in its effort to meet federal ozone standards by reducing emissions of organic solvents, referred to as volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

Ground-level ozone is formed when sunlight cooks volatile organic compounds and oxides of nitrogen (NOx), a product of fuel combustion. Smog is a toxic soup of ozone and fine particles such as soot and ash.

"NOx is probably more important in terms of reducing ozone concentration," said Air Resources Board manager Carla Takemoto. But, she added, volatile organic compounds are an increasingly important pollutant to control.

Studies have shown ozone reduces lung function, worsens asthma and causes coughing and chest tightness.

The proposed amendment covers many common products, including single-use dryer sheets, multipurpose lubricants such as WD-40, carpet and upholstery cleaners, and aerosol glass cleaners.

Takemoto said manufacturers would have to reformulate products to emit fewer volatile organic compounds.

"There are things that can be used that do not contribute to the ozone problem," she said.

The amendment would reduce VOC emissions by about six tons per day.

Current emissions from consumer products – at about 245 tons per day – have remained nearly static, after two decades of product regulation.

Takemoto said reductions in VOCs have been offset by population growth. While technology is helping cars to become cleaner, that's not the case with consumer products, Takemoto said.

VOC emissions from consumer products are catching up with those from cars. Currently, consumer products are the third-largest source of VOC emissions in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valley air basins, and the second-largest source in the South Coast air basin.

By 2020, consumer products are projected to be the largest emitter of VOCs in the state.

In Sacramento, the top two sources of VOC emissions are cars and recreational boats.

Clean Trucks Program is OK'd

PORT: Los Angeles Mayor Villaraigosa approves bid to reduce diesel emissions.

By Art Marroquin, Staff Writer
LA Daily, Friday, June 27, 2008

Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa on Thursday signed the controversial Clean Trucks Program, which aims to reduce big rig diesel emissions by 80 percent within five years.

Beginning Oct. 1, trucks built before 1989 will be banned from the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. By 2012, all trucks entering the twin ports will be required to meet 2007 vehicle emissions standards.

The \$1.6 billion truck replacement program will be funded by a \$35 cargo fee, which went into effect on June 1.

The Clean Trucks Program is part of the larger Clean Air Action Plan, adopted two years ago by the Los Angeles and Long Beach harbor commissions with a goal to reduce all port-related emissions by 45 percent by 2012.

About 1,200 deaths annually across the region are attributed to port pollution, according to the California Air Resource Board.

"When 1,200 lives are cut short every year by toxic emissions coming from the port, we have a moral mandate to act fast and effectively," Villaraigosa said. "That is why I am signing into law the cornerstone segment of the world's most comprehensive, sustainable plan to clean up a major port."

The program also requires nearly 17,000 short-haul truck drivers entering the Port of Los Angeles to become employees of licensed motor carriers by the end of 2013.

That element of the program is opposed by the American Trucking Association, which plans to file a lawsuit against the city sometime next month.

Opponents claim that the new mandate will violate federal free trade laws by banning independent owner-operator truck drivers from the port. The plan also unfairly favors large-scale licensed motor carriers to hire the drivers as employees, which will drive smaller carriers out of business, according to Curtis Whalen of the American Trucking Association.

The Federal Maritime Commission - the agency that determines commerce law - determined earlier this month that competition among trucking firms would not be harmed by the program.

The Port of Long Beach had tried to avoid a lawsuit by adopting a plan that allows both employee and independent owner-operator truckers to continue hauling goods to and from the port, as long as their vehicles meet the program's new emissions standards.

The American Trucking Association also plans to file a lawsuit against the Port of Long Beach amid concerns that officials are trying to regulate the trucking industry.

Labor organizations have supported L.A.'s employee mandate, saying it removes a costly burden on drivers to maintain the new trucks. More than 85 percent of the short-haul trucks moving goods in and out of the twin port complex are currently owned by independent drivers.

"This program will not only clean up our air, it will create good jobs so more people can benefit from the goods movement industry," said Los Angeles City Councilwoman Janice Hahn, whose district includes the port.

Plan launched to cut emissions at port

By Rick Orlov, Staff Writer

LA Daily, Thursday, June 26, 2008

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa on Thursday launched a major effort to clean up emissions at the Port of Los Angeles, approving a five-year Clean Truck Program aimed at replacing 16,000 trucks with clean-fuel vehicles.

"This is a program that will be used as a model around the world," Villaraigosa said during a news conference at City Hall, where he signed the measure adopted last week by the City Council.

Beginning in October, truckers will begin converting to clean-burning fuels in an effort to reduce diesel emissions by 80 percent.

It will affect the immediate area around the Harbor area as well as the 110 Freeway corridor to Union Station.

Key to the agreement was getting trucking companies to agree to hire employee drivers and be responsible for maintenance of the vehicles.

Port Director Geraldine Knatz said the agreement contains incentives for companies to move more quickly to convert to the new vehicles.

Villaraigosa said it is the most far-reaching effort to clean a port ever undertaken by a U.S. city.

"It was made possible only by bringing all the stakeholders together to reach consensus," the mayor said.

In addition to environmental considerations, the plan is designed to improve security by requiring identification for all drivers coming into the port.

The Clean Truck Program is one of a series of environmental actions affecting the port. Other programs include requiring ships to use electrical power when in dock instead of diesel power.

Europe Tells Airlines to Pay for Emissions

By JAMES KANTER

N.Y Times, Friday, June 27, 2008

BRUSSELS — The European Union reached a landmark agreement Thursday to cap emissions from aircraft, raising the stakes in an increasingly ferocious battle with the United States over how to regulate global greenhouse gases.

In the first requirement of its kind, all airlines arriving or leaving from airports in the European Union would be required to buy pollution credits beginning in 2012, joining other industrial polluters that trade in the European emissions market. That includes non-European carriers like American Airlines and Singapore Airlines.

Including airlines in the system is the boldest move yet by Europe to stamp its environmental policies on the rest of the world.

For consumers, such rules could mean further fare increases in the wake of a steady rise in fuel surcharges imposed by airlines — a trend that looks set to continue.

“At the end of the day it’s the people who fly” who will pay more under the new system, warned Anthony Concil, a spokesman for the International Air Transport Association, the industry’s biggest lobbying group.

American officials warned that the requirements probably would be illegal under the convention governing international civil aviation.

“The mandatory application of the European Emissions Trading System to U.S. airlines and airlines of other non-European countries is, we think, both contrary to international law and ultimately unworkable,” said Robert Gianfranceschi, a spokesman at the United States Mission to the European Union in Brussels.

The compromise was reached Thursday by representatives of the European Parliament and by European governments represented by Slovenia, which currently holds the revolving presidency. It states that Europe “should continue to seek an agreement on global measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from aviation,” according to a copy of the text seen by The International Herald Tribune.

The proposal still needs the approval of the European Parliament and individual countries. But people involved in the negotiations said those steps were likely to be a formality, given the political agreement.

Including airlines is also a victory for European regulators, who are seeking to include more polluters in the system. That could help blunt criticism by those who see the European Union as unfairly targeting heavy industry. The carbon trading market, which was started in 2005, caps the overall amount of pollution emitted by industries like electric utilities and steel makers.

The transport association spokesman, Mr. Concil, said the costs to the airline industry of buying permits to comply with European emissions regulations would be more than \$4 billion. Imposing new, costly rules on airlines was “incredible” at a time when the industry is expected to lose more than \$6.1 billion this year, he said.

Opponents argued that the plan would be an ineffective regional effort tackle a problem that requires a global solution. European airlines and charter companies also have said they would be at disadvantage to overseas competitors that operate fewer European routes.

Giovanni Bisignani, the director general of transport association, took out full-page advertisements in newspapers this week calling the plans “crazy” and saying that support for the proposals by governments meant that they had “lost the plot.”

Mr. Bisignani said that the aviation industry was already doing enough to reduce its carbon footprint by investing in new technology and using less fuel. He said negotiations on the creation

of an emissions trading program for the world's airlines should be conducted by the International Civil Aviation Organization, a United Nations body.

The European Commission, Europe's executive arm, which first proposed the rules, has said a global deal would take too long. European officials are determined to put forward their own plans, which would cover the emissions from aircraft flying both legs of journeys to and from major destinations like London, Paris and Frankfurt.

Even so, the agreement reached Thursday reduced the chances of international disagreement, said one person closely involved in the negotiations. He would not be identified in order to allow European governments to make an official announcement about the accord.

He said that if other countries introduced approximately similar measures, Europe would drop its jurisdiction covering emissions on flights leaving countries like the United States, to avoid double regulation.

Most of the initial permits would be allocated to airlines by the European authorities, but airlines would be obliged to buy 15 percent in auctions. A decision on whether airlines would be obliged to buy more permits in later years could be made in coming months, he said.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Schwarzenegger distances himself from McCain's energy plan. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Se distancia Schwarzenegger del plan energético de McCain

Manuel Ocaño

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Friday, June 27, 2008

El gobernador, Arnold Schwarzenegger se distanció del plan energético y ambiental que presentara esta semana en California el virtual candidato presidencial de su partido, John McCain, al considerar que son ideas motivadas por la carestía de combustibles.

Sin referirse directamente al senador, John McCain, el gobernador de California dijo que "los políticos han estado arrojando toda clase de ideas en respuesta a estratosféricas alzas en el precio del combustible".

Schwarzenegger dijo también que esas ideas incluyen la energía nuclear, los agro combustibles y las perforaciones petroleras marítimas, pero advirtió que "quien quiera que les diga que esto reducirá los precios de la gasolina pronto, no está hablando en serio".

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses how more counties in California have been declared under state of emergency due to 230 fires.](#)

Declaran emergencia en otros dos condados de California por unos 230 incendios

Manuel Ocaño

Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Friday, June 27, 2008

El gobierno de California declaró emergencia en otros dos condados más, que enfrentan cerca de 250 incendios de distintas magnitudes.

El gobernador, Arnold Schwarzenegger declaró la emergencia para los condados de Shasta y Mendocino; hace tres días había declarado también situación de emergencia para los condados de Trinity y Monterey.

Hasta 700 incendios consumen terrenos resecos en el norte de California.

Los siniestros se iniciaron por una tormenta eléctrica sin lluvia pero con unas ocho mil descargas sobre territorio reseco el fin de semana pasado.

[Modesto Bee editorial, Friday, June 27, 2008](#)

Avoid fireworks, support charities that sell them

Here's a lineup for you: the Grinch, the Nanny, the Terminator. Oh, and let's add editorial writers, too. Everyone on that list has at one time or another tried to take some small bit of joy out of our lives. Now, it's the Terminator, aka Gov. Schwarzenegger, who has moved to the top of the list. Wednesday, he urged people not to use fireworks on July 4th.

You'd thought he had stolen Whoville's Christmas gifts or yanked candy from a baby. It is the fireworks, after all, that pay for so many worthwhile youth programs -- from soccer balls to musical instruments. A typical charity can net \$10,000 from its booth.

But the governor had a good reason for making his suggestion. After the driest spring in California's history and with 700 wildfires burning across his state, he doesn't want to take the chance that even more will get started -- even accidentally.

Legal fireworks like those sold at stands throughout Stanislaus and south San Joaquin counties rarely cause fires. The sparklers and waterfalls never leave the ground and don't explode with any real force. If used properly -- ignited by adults in an open, paved area with plenty of water at hand -- they're safe. But this year is tragically different. A sparkler dropped into dry grass -- say, in front of a foreclosed suburban house -- could set off a grass fire. The danger is too great. Don't forget, 40 homes were destroyed in Stockton.

The greatest danger is from illegal fireworks -- bottle rockets, firecrackers and larger exploding shells. Unfortunately, those who use them will ignore the governor's admonitions and even an outright ban.

So what are we to do?

First, we must support the nonprofit groups that run the fireworks stands. Even if fireworks are banned, write them a check. If they are not banned, buy fewer fireworks and pay extra.

Why buy fewer fireworks?

Because there's a better reason to hold back this year. Where there's fire, there's smoke, and this year we are being choked by it. Setting off fireworks only makes it worse. Officials at the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District report that particulate matter spikes every Fourth from 9 to 10 p.m.

"The fires are bad," said the district's Jaime Holt, but "seven days from now, we're going to have a man-made air-quality event," and that will only make a horrible situation worse. Particulate matter can permanently damage lungs.

A ban now presents a host of problems. Many charities already have spent hundreds or even a few thousand dollars for liability insurance, rent, credit card machines, fire extinguishers, inspections and decorations.

Their booths are stocked and ready to go. That's money that can't be reimbursed.

But California is a tinderbox. The state and local jurisdictions are spending millions to fight wildfires. Firefighters, risking injury and death, are stretched thin. We're choking on the smoke. Why make it worse?

[S.F. Chronicle editorial, Friday, June 27, 2008:](#)

Getting it right on global warming

Now comes the hard part. After California enacted landmark climate-change goals two years ago, it faced the reality of adopting rules to get the job done.

There were worries over who would pay the bill for controlling emissions, whether green energy could replace fossil fuels, and if the changeover would wreck the state's economy. The results are far from clear, but the first serious look at these challenges was presented this week by state policy makers. The answers are encouraging.

The state Air Resources Board, charged with carrying out the climate-change mandates, believes it's found a balance that spreads the pain, injects incentives in the right spots and puts California on track to cut carbon emissions by 30 percent in 12 years.

Mary Nichols, who heads the board, is mindful of another critical factor: Getting it right in a way that convinces the region, nation and even the planet to follow. Global warming can't be solved by California alone, and mistakes here could set back efforts immeasurably.

Her agency, as it works toward specific rules by year's end, will be under tremendous pressure. The U.S. Senate last month balked at approving rules to cut greenhouse emissions, and the Bush Administration has repeatedly undercut other pollution controls that California has enacted. With these latest rules, the focus will shift to Sacramento to see if it can mollify warring factions and still end up with rules that will curb emissions without harming business.

The smog board's initial thinking is bold enough, though short of specifics. For example, it suggests a cap-and-trade program that would reward clean industry and oblige heavier polluters to pay extra. The mechanics of this system will be closely watched by the electric power industry, which is facing a push to trim coal-burning sources and nearly triple the amount of juice it produces from renewable sources such as wind or solar.

For consumers and business the biggest concern may be cost. Nichols, who was put in charge of the climate change issue by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, begged off predicting financial impacts for now. But she said that the slate of initiatives would boost the state's economy by one percent in the goal-line year of 2020. Among the biggest boosters of the climate-change package are Silicon Valley financiers, who believe the field is ripe for growth.

In taking action, California - and the rest of the world - really don't have much choice. There's next to no doubt about global warming and its changes to weather, farming, health and habitation. The right mix of controls and incentives must be crafted to repair this worldwide problem. California can't do it alone, but it can show the way.

[Letter to the Merced Sun-Star, Friday, June 27, 2008:](#)

Incentives for bikes

Editor: As gas prices have risen to their swollen levels of today, alternative transportation methods have become more and more appealing.

One of the most simple and obvious alternatives is the bicycle -- it is economical and fast, as well as a provider of recreation.

Already, people around town have caught on to this international revolution, and bikes dot the streets.

But many of Merced's roads are not prepared to handle this onslaught of bikes.

Case in point: McKee Road.

This travesty of a road has left cyclists clinging on to an infinitesimal shoulder as cars whiz by threatening decapitation.

It is interesting that such an important artery in East Merced, particularly with the development of UC Merced and the contiguity of both public high schools, remains egregiously unaccommodating to our heroic energy-savers.

If our city truly wants to improve our air, we need to allow bicycles to ride on all of Merced's roads without a health risk.

It is our desire to improve the insufficient shoulders along the extreme ends of McKee Road in the interest of allowing our city's bicyclists to reach their destinations safely.

If anyone would like to join in with this effort or has any information about how we might achieve this goal, please e-mail us at plauppe@aol.com or spinardi_jeff@yahoo.com.

We need to provide an incentive for bike riding; who wants to ride a bike when a broken bone is just a pedal away?

Jeff Spinardi and Patrick Lauppe, Merced