

Tulare man wins Prius in contest

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Saturday, Oct. 11, 2008

A Tulare man Friday won a Toyota Prius from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Gerry Koenig was presented the hybrid car at 3 p.m. Friday at Visalia Toyota, 1313 East Main St. in Visalia.

Koenig's name was drawn randomly in a contest this summer as part of Healthy Air Living Week, a program that encourages people to make one change in their lives that will reduce air emissions.

Composter seeks supervisors' blessing

BY JAMES BURGER, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Monday, Oct. 13, 2008

Controversial composting company Community Recycling will go before the Kern County Board of Supervisors Tuesday asking for the right to crush gypsum wallboard for use as a soil amendment and to take in food waste, pre-consumer refuse and cow manure for use in its composting process.

Community Recycling has earned the ire of neighbors for strong smells they claim come from the site. Kern County Environmental Health Services Department officers have issued violations against the company for blowing trash and for dumping compost filled with plastic, metal and other trash on farm fields it owns.

The company has been fined by supervisors for stockpiling and crushing gypsum wallboard on its property without a permit.

In a report to supervisors released by the county Planning Department this week, it is noted that all the company's violations have been cleaned up.

Planners recommend a number of new conditions be placed on Community Recycling before it is allowed to take in the new materials.

Fires good for forests, not air

As smoke poured into valley, spike in violations recorded

By Mark Grossi

Fresno Bee, Modesto Bee, Merced Sun-Star and other papers, Monday, October 13, 2008

When officials decided not to stop the Tehipite fire east of Fresno, they got three big payoffs -- a cheaper fire to manage, reduced risk for firefighters and cleanup of dangerously overgrown forest.

But this fire -- which has burned 11,000 acres since mid-July -- worries the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Officials fear that smoke and ozone-making gases might harm air quality.

The district needs further analysis to determine if the Tehipite and another blaze, called the Hidden fire, caused bad-air days in the valley. State records show that this region had its highest September total of ozone violations in five years.

Then a familiar debate begins, pitting beneficial forest fires against unwanted smoke. The valley's air quality is among the worst in the country, but Sierra Nevada fires are natural and necessary to eliminate excess growth that fuels catastrophic fires.

No control over natural burns

Air violations in the valley won't count against the district later if fires caused them. But while the district becomes involved in controlling smoke from any human-made fire, it has no authority over natural lightning-caused blazes, such as the Tehipite fire.

"I can't order them to put it out," said district executive director Seyed Sadredin.

In June, the state got a taste of poor air quality from fires burning overgrown forests. Hundreds of lightning-caused fires in Northern California sent tons of ozone-forming gases and soot into the air, causing violations throughout the state.

The valley had violations for soot and ozone in June. The soot violations occurred from Stockton to Bakersfield for four consecutive days, which is considered unusual.

But there were no soot violations in September, according to state records. The Tehipite and Hidden fires have not been as big a problem for the valley, according to federal officials.

Parks officials added that air quality is not the only factor when evaluating whether to stop a fire or let it burn. The bigger concerns are protecting the public and keeping firefighters safe.

But if needed, the National Park Service and other federal agencies could douse parts of the Tehipite fire to eliminate excessive smoke.

Smoke is one of the main reasons park officials moved quickly to extinguish the Hidden fire in Sequoia. It was contained in late September at about 3,700 acres.

The fire was near the Generals Highway. There also were nearby tourist attractions, such as Crystal Cave and the trail to the Muir Grove of giant sequoias, and officials worried about how smoke would affect visitors.

"We have a lot to lose if there's a problem with air quality," said Deb Schweizer, fire information specialist with Sequoia and Kings Canyon. "We want to protect the public and the forest from poor air quality."

When the Tehipite fire started in Kings Canyon National Park, park officials tried to stop it, hoping to avoid smoke problems. But seven firefighters were injured in steep and dangerous terrain, Schweizer said.

Officials re-evaluated and decided to let it burn rather than risk more injuries in one of the most remote places in the park. It has since burned into the Sierra National Forest.

A good cleanout needed

U.S. Forest Service officials are helping by watching air quality carefully in the foothills. They have placed portable air monitoring devices at Hume Lake, North Fork, Prather, Trimmer and Oak-hurst, said Trent Procter, the service's regional air quality program manager.

Red flag fire danger warning issued for East Bay Hills

Oakland Tribune

Contra Costa Times, Monday, October 13, 2008

As the fire rages on Angel Island, the National Weather Service has issued a red flag fire danger warning for the East Bay hills today.

The warning most likely will be extended until 11 a.m. Tuesday, Weather Service meteorologist Mark Strobin said.

"We're looking at warm, offshore winds gusting to about 20 or 25 miles per hour in the higher elevations," Strobin said. The moisture content in brush on the hills is just about negligible. It's really dry, he said.

The Oakland Fire Department has a unit on fire patrol in the higher elevations of the Oakland hills, the department said.

High-speed rail: lasting legacy or taxpayer boondoggle?

By STACEY SHEPARD, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Monday, Oct. 13, 2008

When Californians go to the polls in November, they'll finally vote on a project they've heard about since 1995: high-speed rail.

Proposition 1A asks state voters to approve \$10 billion in bond sales to start construction the largest public works project in state history: an 800-mile rail system that would run from San Francisco to Los Angeles with stops in Bakersfield, Fresno and other Central Valley cities.

Local support comes from groups and individuals who see the need for better a transportation system and the regional economic benefits it will bring.

But with a hefty price tag — about \$33 billion to fund the San Francisco to Los Angeles portion — opponents say the project's funding plan is flawed and could end up costing the state much more than what's been proposed.

LOCAL IMPACTS

A recent report commissioned by the California High-Speed Rail Authority shed positive light on the project's potential to bring billions in direct and indirect economic benefits to the Central Valley.

Kern County Taxpayer Association President Mike Turnipseed said the project is worth the cost.

He pointed to projects such as the California Aqueduct and state university system, championed by former Gov. Pat Brown, as examples of infrastructure projects that create jobs, strengthen the local economy and serve lasting purposes.

"That's what made California a great state," Turnipseed said. "But we haven't done that since Pat Brown. Instead, our state spends billions and billions of dollars every year that we have zero return on."

The train could also speed progress on clean air by cutting air pollution from vehicles, said San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District Executive Director Seyed Sadredin.

But it will only work if the system has numerous stops throughout the valley. While that's currently the plan, Sadredin believe construction costs will escalate and some stops may get cut.

"If it's just a substitute for air travel between Los Angeles and San Francisco, that wouldn't help us," he said.

COST CONCERNS

Fears that the project's proposed costs will escalate are the main concerns expressed by those against Proposition 1A.

They say the lack of firm funding commitments to build the project will result in a taxpayer boondoggle similar to Boston's Big Dig.

The California High-Speed Rail Authority said additional money for the project will come from the federal government and private investors. But critics are pessimistic about those promises.

"Given the way the markets have gone there's no way in hell they're going to get private sector investment in this," said Adrian Moore, a transportation economist with the Reason Foundation.

Opponents also say the rail authority failed to produce an updated business plan by Sept. 1, a requirement it committed to in a bill this summer that added more fiscal oversight to the bond measure.

In response, Howard Jarvis Taxpayer's Association filed a lawsuit this week, asking a court to compel the rail authority to produce the report.

State Sen. Roy Ashburn, R-Bakersfield, lauded the group's effort, accusing the authority of "a clear violation of the law."

"You cannot come to the legislature and say you'll do something ... and then defy it," Ashburn said. "I'm saying to the voters, 'Say no and hang onto your wallets.'"

The rail authority's executive director Mehdi Morshed said the late state budget, which didn't pass until mid-September, held up money to prepare the plan.

"It's kind of silly to criticize us when they didn't get us the money in time to put the plan together and get it reviewed," Morshed said.

The rail authority hopes to get the plan out a few days before Nov. 4, but most of the information it will contain has already been made public, Morshed said.

In response to fiscal concerns, Morshed said Proposition 1A contains more taxpayer protections than any bond he's seen before. It caps money spent on administrative costs at 2.5 percent and prohibits spending more than 10 percent of the money until matching funds are secured.

Morshed said the bulk of the project's costs won't come due for at least 10 years.

"We all have to bet that our economy is good enough 10 years from now to be able to afford that," he said. "If you're not that optimistic, we should probably just leave town."

About California High-Speed Rail

The California High-Speed Rail would be an 800-mile network of trains travelling at speeds of up to 220 miles per hour.

Costs: \$33 billion (in 2008 dollars) to construct the mainline from San Francisco to Los Angeles and Anaheim. Up to \$45 billion for full buildout, which includes extensions to San Diego and Sacramento. The system is expected to cost \$1 billion per year to operate, which would be offset by fare revenue.

It will cost the state about \$19 billion to pay off Proposition 1A bonds over 30 years, with average annual payments of \$650 million.

Financing: Of the \$10 billion in Prop 1A bond sales, \$9 billion would be spent to build high-speed rail and about \$1 billion will be spent to improve existing rail systems that would connect to it. Remaining funds to build the mainline would come from the federal government and private investors. Train fares are expected to pay for part or all of the system's operating costs.

Technology: Trains would be electrified with steel wheels and rails.

Trip times/fares (one-way): Bakersfield to Los Angeles, 54 minutes; \$28. Bakersfield to San Francisco, 1 hour 51 minutes, \$43; Bakersfield to Fresno, 37 minutes, \$25.

Timeline: Some segments could be operating in six years. Full operation will likely take up to 10 years. Polls: A July Field Poll showed 56 percent of voters favored Proposition 1A.

Sources: California Legislative Analyst's Office, California High-Speed Rail Authority, The Field Poll

Facing New Maritime Pollution Rules, Can Countries Cooperate?

By Felicity Barringer

New York Times, Monday, Oct. 13, 2008

When 168 countries in the International Maritime Organization decided last week to cut emissions from the smokestacks of ocean-going ships, both environmental advocates and shipping interests cheered.

The first group because the standards will reduce particulate matter and other conventional pollutants like sulfur dioxide and oxides of nitrogen, which contribute to ozone and cause lung and heart disease. The second, because the rules will be applied internationally, affecting all countries equally.

But will they? The meeting in London settled the questions of what pollutants needed to be reduced, when, and by how much. The question of where remains open.

The rule set out two very different standards, for instance, for the sulfur content of the fuel the ships burn. A tight standard, which gets tighter over time, was established for what are called "emission control areas." A far looser standard applies everywhere else.

The boundaries of these "emission control areas," however, have yet to be determined. It is up to each country to submit its proposed boundaries to the International Maritime Organization by March of next year.

In the United States, there is a strong push among groups like the Environmental Defense Fund for the Environmental Protection Agency to request that the entire coastline of North America, up to 200 nautical miles out from the shore, be designated an "E.C.A."

Otherwise, as Richard D. Steinke, the executive director of the port of Long Beach, said: "Does Seattle-Tacoma have one and Vancouver, British Columbia not have one? And does that become a competitive advantage?"

His thought is that the west coast of North America should be a single E.C.A. stretching "ideally, from Baja California to Prince Rupert." That would require cooperation between the United States, Mexico and Canada.

Margo Oge, the director of the office of mobile sources in the E.P.A.'s Air and Radiation office, said that discussions with Canada are well along, while Mexico is still studying the issues involved in setting boundaries.

Ms. Oge said that 40 U.S. ports, where 89 million people live, are in areas that fail to meet federal standards for ozone or particulate matter. And, she said, ship-related particulates can be found as far away as the Dakotas. This may argue for making the ships switch to cleaner fuels as far out to sea as possible.

Ms. Oge said her agency is examining the relative benefits of extending the emissions control area to 50, 100 and 200 nautical miles from shore.

David Marshall, the senior counsel for the Clean Air Task Force, has been following the negotiations for months, and is pleased with the progress on sulfur, but less so on the International Maritime Organization's ability to deal with conventional pollutants like oxides of nitrogen and with greenhouse gases.

Regulation of carbon dioxide, he said, would come by next July at the earliest. "If the I.M.O. doesn't act in a meaningful way" in 2009, he said, "the European Community will."

Efforts on global warming chilled by economic woes

By DINA CAPPIELLO, Associated Press Writer

S.F. Chronicle and USA Today, Sunday, October 12, 2008

Democratic leaders in the House and the Senate, and both presidential candidates, continue to rank tackling global warming as a chief goal next year. But the focus on stabilizing the economy probably will make it more difficult to pass a law to reduce carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. At the very least, it will push back when the reductions would have to start.

As one Republican senator put it, the green bubble has burst.

"Clearly it is somewhere down the totem pole given the economic realities we are facing," said Tom Williams, a spokesman for Duke Energy Corp., an electricity producer that has supported federal mandates on greenhouse gases. Duke is a member of the U.S. Climate Action Partnership, an association of businesses and nonprofit groups that has lobbied Congress to act.

Just months ago, chances for legislation passing in the next Congress and becoming law looked promising. The presidential candidates support mandatory cuts and a Democratic majority is ready to act on the problem after years of the Bush administration's resisting federal controls.

But the most popular remedy for slowing global warming, a mechanism known as cap-and-trade, could put further stress on a teetering economy.

Under such a system, the government would establish a market for carbon dioxide by giving or selling credits to companies with operations that emit greenhouse gases. The companies can then choose whether to invest in technologies to reduce emissions to meet targets or instead buy credits from other companies who have already met them.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Rep. Rick Boucher, D-Va., said that in light of the economic downturn, a bill that would give polluters permits free of charge would be preferable.

"The first way we can control program costs is by not charging industrial emitters," said Boucher, who released a first draft of a bill this past week with the chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Rep. John Dingell, D-Mich. Giving away right-to-pollute permits was one of the options.

Other Democrats, however, see a cap-and-trade bill — and the government revenues it would generate from selling permits — as an engine for economic growth. Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama supports auctioning off all permits, using the money to help fund alternative energy.

"If you see this as a job creation opportunity for the U.S. to develop the products that are then sold around the world, then you should be optimistic about what the impact of passage would mean for the American economy," said Rep. Edward Markey, D-Mass.

Conservative Republicans who were never fans of a law to curb greenhouse gases have used the economic downturn as a rallying cry.

Oklahoma Sen. James Inhofe, the senior Republican on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, in a blog entry this month criticized 152 House members for releasing a set of principles to tackle global warming in the midst of the economic turmoil.

"The current economic crisis only reinforces the public's wariness about any climate bill that attempts to increase the costs of energy and jeopardizes jobs," Inhofe said.

Rep. Joe Barton, R-Texas, took the argument a step further when he said the Boucher-Dingell bill could lead the country "off the economic cliff."

But even supporters of federal regulation of greenhouse gases acknowledge that something has to give given the state of the economy.

Sen. John Warner, R-Va., a lead sponsor of a Senate bill to curb greenhouse gases that failed this year, acknowledged that the economy could delay when reductions in carbon dioxide would start.

Warner told the AP that any bill should allow the president to decide.

"We must continue to think and devise a piece of legislation that will enable the president of the United States to control timing ... dependent on the president's analysis for the ability of the economy to assume the financial burdens," he said.

The U.S. is not alone. As the economic crisis has spread to markets across the globe, work to curb greenhouse gases elsewhere has stalled.

Earlier this past week, Rajendra Pachauri, head of the U.N. climate panel, said discussions about global warming solutions were "on the back burner." Pachauri shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize with former Vice President Al Gore for their work on climate change.

"I'm absolutely sure that climate change will be the last thing people will think about at this point in time," he said. "Sooner or later, they will come back to it."

The upside is that in hard economic times, and with high energy prices, the amount of **pollution** in the **air** tends to decline.

That will slow global warming somewhat, but there are already enough heat-trapping gases in the atmosphere to cause the temperature to rise.

"I really wish that the science of global warming would look at the newspaper, and say we have an economic crisis so the Earth will stop warming," said Dave Hamilton, director of the Sierra Club's global warming and energy program. "But that is not going to happen."

Wildfire chases families out

By Tony Castro, Staff Writer
Daily News, Sunday, October 12, 2008

Longtime Kagel Canyon resident Adrienne Cataldo knows firsthand what firefighters faced while battling a wildfire Sunday that torched two homes and threatened hundreds more in the Angeles National Forest.

"Where we live, I've always said, 'One big wind and we're in real trouble,'" said Cataldo, 63.

Cataldo was one of 1,200 residents evacuated from Kagel and Lopez canyons ahead of a blaze that would blacken more than 2,000 acres north of the San Fernando Valley during the first major wildfire of the year.

More than 1,000 firefighters, backed by water-dumping helicopters and planes, worked frantically ahead of powerful Santa Ana winds expected by nightfall.

In addition to the two houses, three motor homes were destroyed. Hundreds of exotic animals at the Wildlife Waystation sanctuary in Little Tujunga Canyon were near the fire, but were not evacuated.

The fire was 20 percent encircled by Sunday evening, but was expected to burn for days.

"As long as there is active fire, which we still have, we are worried about the winds kicking up," Los Angeles County Fire Department spokesman Ron Haralson said.

A strong wind can carry embers up to a mile, officials said, blowing burning brands into surrounding brush, grass and chest-high chaparral.

No one was seriously injured in Sunday's blaze. A firefighter and one resident reported minor breathing problems.

The cause of the fire was not immediately known. An early report that the blaze broke out at a nearby gun range was discredited by Los Angeles County Fire Chief P. Michael Freeman.

The blaze - dubbed the Marek fire because of the nearby Marek Truck Trail - broke out at 2 a.m. near Little Tujunga Road, prompting the evacuation of about 450 homes in the areas of Lopez and Kagel canyons, north of Lake View Terrace.

"It burned right down to a couple of neighborhoods," said U.S. Forest Service spokesman Stanton Florea.

Wind gusts clocked as high as 50 mph spread the fire west toward ranches and houses in three heavily forested canyons, then along the foothills parallel to the 210 Freeway.

Many praised the quick work of firefighters for saving all but two homes.

"We were a little jittery early this morning," said Gary Jones, 53, who lives in Kagel Canyon and was among 20 families evacuated to an American Red Cross center at San Fernando High School. But he said fire officials gave him and others the thumbs-up about their homes.

"I gave him my address," Jones said. "And he said, 'Your house is safe.'"

For many of those evacuated, the wake-up call after midnight ordering them to evacuate was unsettling in what, for many, was the first major threat to their rustic canyon homes.

"You always hear those stories about people who don't leave in a hurricane, and I've always said, 'What a bunch of nuts,'" said Tim Weske, 51, who has lived in Kagel Canyon for eight years.

"But you know, I'll never say that again because it takes one (to know one). I didn't want to leave. I didn't want to leave my house."

Weske said he and neighbors all were trying to hose down the roofs of their homes as embers cascaded down around them.

"All of a sudden, the flames hit the top of the hill at the same time they hit (Kagel Canyon) park," Weske recalled. "I could see 'em flying over the trees, and the whole thing filled with [smoke](#). There was nothing more I could do except get killed or burned up.

"So I took off."

By Sunday afternoon, Weske, along with girlfriend Gowrie Hayden and their 2-year-old dog Amber, were among about two dozen evacuees hanging out in front of San Fernando High.

All told similar accounts of being startled awake by firefighters and police at various times after 2 a.m. and of hearing loud helicopters overhead.

"We could see where the fire was just marching on down toward Kagel Canyon," said resident Bill Slocum, 50. "But we knew the danger when we built our house. It's part of living in Southern California."

Russell Cataldo, 79, who has lived in the area for 20 years, said he was surprised that the fire had breached Little Tujunga Road and jumped eastward.

"I never thought it would come over the hill, but it did," said Cataldo.

U.S. Forest Service spokesman Stanton Florea said that for the most part, firefighting efforts were able to keep the flames to the west of Little Tujunga Road.

"This will be important as winds die down and the fire becomes more driven by topography," said Florea.

Mindful that the area hit by the fire is horse country, officials also established an animal evacuation center at the Hansen Dam Equestrian Center.

The fire was burning south of the Wildlife Waystation, an animal sanctuary and rehabilitation facility set on 160 acres. The nonprofit agency houses more than 400 animals, including lions, bears and deer. Officials were loading up the animals in case the fire switched direction.

Meanwhile, those evacuated were anticipating their return home and recalling the close brush with disaster.

"It was just so mesmerizing to look at it and so beautiful at that time of the morning," said Adrienne Cataldo. "You want to just stay and watch it." But firefighters know that in an instant, it can turn deadly."

Brush burns set for Sequoia National Forest

S.F. Chronicle, Modesto Bee and Fresno Bee, Saturday, October 11, 2008

FRESNO, Calif. — Rangers plan to burn brush in the Sequoia National Forest during the upcoming rainy season to reduce the chance of wildfires next summer.

U.S. Forest Service spokesman Denise Alonzo says burns are set for areas dampened by recent storms including the Giant Sequoia National Monument, Hume Lake, Burton Pass, Delilah, Pinehurst and Heartland in Fresno and Tulare counties. The burning of brush near Sugarloaf and points farther south will begin after significant rainfall.

Alonzo says burning could begin this weekend and continue through April. Officials with the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution District will monitor the potential effect on air quality.

Blowing dust prompts health warning

BY EMILY HAGEDORN, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Friday, Oct. 10, 2008

Wind and dust mean two things on the valley floor of Kern County — a high concentration of particulate matter and heightened risk of valley fever.

And Thursday had both of them.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District issued a health caution Thursday — lasting through Friday evening — alerting residents of a high level of particulate matter being blown with the dust.

Blowing dust can result in concentrations of particulate matter 10 microns and smaller, or PM10, which can aggravate lung disease, increase risk of respiratory infections and cause asthma attacks and acute bronchitis, the statement said.

The wind reached about 10 mph in Bakersfield Thursday, said Brenda Turner, spokeswoman for the district. The fastest winds were experienced north of Bakersfield in Lemoore, with 36 mph gusts.

Agricultural harvesting and a lack of rain have led to more dust, she said.

"It's just not a good situation," Turner said.

Wind and dust can also contribute to more cases of valley fever, an infection picked up from a fungus found in Kern's soil, said Dr. Portia Choi, deputy health officer with the county Public Health Services Department.

Roughly 60 percent of people infected have no symptoms; 40 percent have cold- or flu-like symptoms.

The rarest and most severe cases cause nodules, ulcers, lesions in the skin and bones, swollen joints, meningitis and even death.

"We're in what is considered a highly endemic area" for valley fever, Choi said. "On windy days, you have to take precautions because the spores will be in the soil."

To guard against breathing in particulate matter and valley fever spores:

- Avoid prolonged outdoor exposure and staying inside.
- Avoid strenuous activity and heavy exertion.
- Wear masks when outdoors.
- Drive with windows closed.
- Keep windows closed in homes.
- Change clothes and shower after being outside in dusty conditions.
- After the wind dies, wet and clean dust collected on window ledges or porches.

Blowing dust prompts health warning

By Sentinel Staff

Hanford Sentinel, Friday, Oct. 10, 2008

FRESNO -- Gusty winds throughout the San Joaquin Valley on Thursday prompted local air-pollution officials to issue a health cautionary statement through tonight.

Winds throughout the Central Valley produced pockets of blowing dust, particularly on the Westside along the Interstate 5 route in Fresno and Kings counties. Blowing dust can result in unhealthy concentrations of particulate matter 10 microns or smaller, or PM10, according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Valley residents were urged to use caution today and tonight, particularly people with heart or lung diseases, and older adults along with children should avoid prolonged exposure or outside activities.

Temperatures dropped in the Valley with the arrival of a cold front, and high temperatures were expected to drop into the upper 60s today and Saturday. No rain was in the forecast, however, and high temperatures were expected to climb back into the low 80s by early next week.

Environmental group says it will sue over air pollution rules

BY STACEY SHEPARD, Californian staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Friday, Oct. 10, 2008

A local environmental group announced plans to sue the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Thursday for failing to decide if two air pollution rules in the San Joaquin Valley meet the requirements of the federal Clean Air Act.

One of the rules regulates air pollution from dairies and has been enforced by local air regulators for about a year. But the environmental group, Shafter-based Association of Irrigated Residents (AIR), says the regulation is based on shaky science and doesn't go far enough to reduce pollution.

However, the group can't challenge the rule until the EPA acts on it.

"This isn't a nitpicky technical lawsuit, this is getting EPA off its butt to ensure ... the valley achieves cleaner air faster," said Brent Newell, an attorney for the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment, which legally represents AIR.

The EPA is supposed to approve or reject a local air pollution rule within a year of receiving it and analyzing whether it meets federal criteria. The agency received the dairy rule in 2006 but has taken no action.

The other rule the agency hasn't acted on would impose fees on businesses if the valley doesn't meet a certain air pollution benchmark by 2010.

In a separate lawsuit earlier this year, AIR charged that the EPA failed to approve or reject a 2004 smog cleanup for the San Joaquin Valley, which is one of the nation's most-polluted air basins. A judge sided with AIR and the EPA announced earlier this week that it plans to approve the cleanup proposal.

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District drafted the 2004 smog plan and the two rules AIR is disputing. The district stands by the effectiveness of the plan and the two rules but agreed the EPA should take action on them.

"In some ways we agree with (AIR) that EPA should have acted on these rules but we're not waiting on (EPA) to implement them," said the district Executive Director Seyed Sadredin.

EPA officials issued a statement saying they can't comment on pending litigation but the agency "is very concerned with the serious health impacts of San Joaquin air pollution."

Study: Calif wildfires increased ozone pollution

By ALICIA CHANG, AP Science Writer

S.F. Chronicle, Tri-Valley Herald, Modesto Bee and other papers, Friday, October 10, 2008

LOS ANGELES — An outbreak of wildfires in California last year worsened smog pollution in rural areas and caused levels to spike above federal air quality standards, a study released Thursday found.

California witnessed an intense wildfire season in 2007 with drought conditions and unusually powerful Santa Ana winds fanning flames. More than 9,000 fires blackened over a million acres around the state and destroyed more than 2,000 homes.

Scientists at the National Center for Atmospheric Research focused on blazes that broke out last September and October.

Using computer models and data from 55 rural ground monitoring stations, they found that drifting smoke from wildfires sent ozone pollution to unhealthy levels in 66 instances, about triple the usual number.

The calculations were based on the Environmental Protection Agency's old standard for ozone at 80 parts per billion over an eight-hour period. The EPA earlier this year tightened the amount of ozone that will be allowed in the air to 75 parts per billion.

Under the stricter smog limit, scientists estimated that violations would double from the previous standard.

Lead scientist Gabriele Pfister said rural regions can be affected even if they are far from the fire and smoke. Unhealthy air lingered in parts of Kern, Tulare, El Dorado and Mariposa counties.

"It can be a health problem even if you don't see anything," she said.

Ozone, which needs sunlight to form, is a yellow haze of pollutants that hangs in the air. Ozone exposure can raise the risk of respiratory illnesses, especially among the elderly and children.

During last year's fires, air regulators sent out daily alerts about unhealthy air and urged people with breathing problems to stay indoors. The dirty air forced schools to cancel classes and shut down outdoor concerts. Hospitals reported seeing a jump in people being treated for breathing problems.

The study, published in the *Geophysical Research Letters*, was funded by NASA and the National Science Foundation.

Beijing to ban half its cars during high pollution

from the Associated Press

S.F. Chronicle, Modesto Bee, Merced Sun-Star and other papers, Friday, October 10, 2008

BEIJING — Beijing will ban half of its 3.4 million cars from the roads during periods of very heavy pollution, a state news report said Friday.

The city will temporarily reinstate measures it introduced during the Olympic Games and ban cars on alternate days - depending on whether their license plates are odd or even - if pollution levels rise to extreme levels, the China Daily newspaper said.

"To protect public health over the long term, we must use both methods that increase the number of good air quality days and more stringent measures for when conditions are extremely unfavorable," the deputy director of the city's environmental protection bureau, Du Shaozhong, was quoted as saying.

Work would also be suspended at construction sites and high-polluting factories during extremely polluted periods, the newspaper said.

The restrictions will only be imposed if the air pollution index reaches 300, a threshold far above the city's normal air quality level, it said.

The driving restrictions imposed during the Olympic Games allowed Beijing's 17 million residents to enjoy clear blue summer skies as the city recorded its lowest August pollution levels in 10 years.

Since then, there have been calls in newspaper editorials for an extension of the Olympic traffic measures.

Last month, Beijing officials announced they would introduce some traffic restrictions for a six-month trial period.

At the start of October, city officials took nearly a third of government vehicles off the road. Starting next week, the remaining government cars, together with privately owned vehicles, will be banned from roads one day a week on a rotation basis according to license plate numbers. The rules do not apply on weekends and are to continue through February.

Thursday's pollution level was 47. Levels of 51-100 are considered moderate pollution, and anything over 100 is harmful to susceptible groups, including children and the elderly.

During the Olympics, the level dropped as low as 17 after registering nearly 100 just a day before the opening ceremony, according to the government.

Smoky Camp Pendleton wildfire contained

Modesto Bee, Friday, October 10, 2008

CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. — A wildfire on a Marine Corps training range was contained early Thursday but drifting smoke prompted worried 911 calls miles away and a health advisory across Southern California.

The blaze burned between 1,400 and 1,900 acres, said Maj. Kristen Lasica.

The fire erupted Wednesday afternoon on the 125,000-acre base in northern San Diego County as hot, dry weather gripped Southern California. The flames were far from the populated part of the base but its golf course was evacuated as a precaution. No injuries were reported.

At its peak, the fire sent up a huge plume of smoke and dumped ash on homes in neighboring Orange and Riverside counties. On Thursday, drifting smoke still could be seen in some areas and some people in Los Angeles, called 911 to report the smell of smoke, Fire Department spokesman Brian Humphrey said.

The Southern California Air Quality Management District issued an advisory saying the smoke could create unhealthful air quality for sensitive people, such as those with heart or lung disease.

People in areas where the smoke could be seen or smelled were advised to avoid unnecessary outdoor activities, the AQMD said in a statement.

Marine officials said they did not know the fire's cause or whether training was going on at the range at the time. A second fire erupted at about 12:45 p.m. Thursday in another area of the base but was quickly contained at 10 acres, said Bill Gick, a fire inspector at the base.

Camp Pendleton is home to the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force.

The U.S. Forest Service, meanwhile, said it was increasing wildfire readiness in Southern California because of predictions of weekend Santa Ana winds.

Forests were staffing firefighters for 24-hour shifts, and 20 additional engines, 12 heavy air tanker and six Sky Crane helicopters were moved into the region, a Forest Service statement said.

The Air National Guard was asked to provide two C-130 aircraft equipped with Modular Airborne Fire Fighting Systems, it said.

The National Weather Service said it will be the first significant Santa Ana wind event of the season and that strongest of the gusty northeast winds were expected Sunday night through Monday.

Fuel Tech Announces Fuel Chem(R) Demonstration

Fresno Bee, Friday, October 10, 2008

Fuel Tech, Inc. (NASDAQ: FTEK), a world leader in advanced engineering solutions for the optimization of combustion systems in utility and industrial applications, today announced receipt of a FUEL CHEM(R) demonstration order from a domestic electric utility. The contract represents the first FUEL CHEM order secured from this existing air pollution control client. The demonstration will be conducted on a large, Powder River Basin (PRB) coal-fired boiler, with chemical feed expected to commence during the fourth quarter.

"We are pleased to be implementing our first TIFI(TM) Targeted In-Furnace Injection(TM) program for this long-established air pollution control customer," commented John F. Norris Jr., President and Chief Executive Officer. "Our client's use of PRB coals has created challenging slagging problems and these will be addressed with the deployment of a customized FUEL CHEM program. Among the many benefits we anticipate is an improvement in boiler performance, which should enhance unit reliability, reduce downtime and promote greater megawatt production, while reducing the rate of pollution emissions and CO2."

Mr. Norris concluded, "This demonstration brings to 13 the number of FUEL CHEM purchase orders secured this year, including 11 on coal-fired units. As such, it ties our 2007 record for total new FUEL CHEM announcements."

About Fuel Tech

Fuel Tech is a leading technology company engaged in the worldwide development, commercialization and application of state-of-the-art proprietary technologies for air pollution control, process optimization, and advanced engineering services. These technologies enable customers to produce both energy and processed materials in a cost-effective and environmentally sustainable manner.

The Company's nitrogen oxide (NOx) reduction technologies include the NOxOUT(R), NOxOUT CASCADE(R), NOxOUT ULTRA(R), Rich Reagent Injection (RRI) and NOxOUT-SCR(R) processes. These technologies have established Fuel Tech as a leader in post-combustion NOx control systems, with installations on over 450 units worldwide, where coal, municipal waste, biomass, and other fuels are utilized.

The Company's FUEL CHEM(R) technology revolves around the unique application of chemicals to improve the efficiency, reliability, fuel flexibility and environmental status of combustion units by controlling slagging, fouling, corrosion, opacity and acid plume, as well as the formation of sulfur trioxide, ammonium bisulfate, particulate matter (PM2.5), carbon dioxide and NOx. This technology, in the form of a customizable FUEL CHEM program, is being applied to over 100 combustion units burning a wide variety of fuels including coal, heavy oil, biomass, and municipal waste. A breakdown of the nature of these customer units is posted on the Company's website.

The Company also provides a range of services to help optimize selective catalytic reduction system performance, including catalyst management services and ammonia injection grid tuning. In addition, flow corrective devices and physical and computational modeling services are available to optimize flue gas distribution and mixing in both power plant and industrial applications.

Many of Fuel Tech's products and services rely heavily on the Company's exceptional Computational Fluid Dynamics modeling capabilities, which are enhanced by internally developed, high-end visualization software. These capabilities, coupled with the Company's innovative technologies and multi-disciplined team approach, enable Fuel Tech to provide practical solutions to some of our customers' most challenging problems. For more information, visit Fuel Tech's web site at www.ftek.com.

This press release may contain statements of a forward-looking nature regarding future events. These statements are only predictions and actual events may differ materially. Please refer to documents that Fuel Tech files from time to time with the Securities and Exchange Commission for a discussion of certain factors that could cause actual results to differ materially from those contained in the forward-looking statements.

[Tri-Valley Herald, Commentary, Saturday, October 11, 2008](#)

Your Turn: Mobile sources of air pollution must be attacked

By Jack Broadbent, Your Turn

This newspaper's recent editorial about East Oakland ("Time to clear the air," Oct. 29) rightly makes the point that there is a need to improve the air quality in that community. The Bay Area Air Quality Management District agrees, particularly because our recent Community Air Risk Evaluation study identified East Oakland/San Leandro as one of six impacted communities in need of focused effort to improve the air quality.

Stationary sources of pollution in the East Oakland/San Leandro area have been studied by both the California Air Resources Board and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. Although stationary sources contribute to the overall pollution problems in the area, a majority of the air pollution is attributable to mobile sources such as cars and trucks from the I-880 freeway.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District has studied and reported emission levels in its Community Air Risk Evaluation (CARE) Phase 1 study, which indeed found East Oakland, San Leandro and the 880 corridor to have high levels of air pollution.

That is why it is one of the six communities within the air district being targeted for increased outreach and funding in Phase 2 of the program.

As part of CARE, the air district has made presentations on its findings this year to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Alameda County Transportation Round Table.

Community Air Risk Evaluation outreach meetings have been held in San Leandro and one or more are being planned for 2009 in East Oakland.

In addition, the air district has dedicated \$825,000 in grant funding this fiscal year to support community efforts in East Oakland and San Leandro to explore ways to reduce health impacts from truck traffic and diesel emissions in the community.

The results of this funding are projected to reduce emissions in the area by more than 34 tons annually.

One such project is the district's major sponsorship of a new partnership that is bringing a mobile asthma clinic to East and West Oakland as well as Emeryville. The Breathmobile will travel monthly to 20 schools and other locations to provide services free of cost in those communities.

Once again, it is correct that efforts need to be made to improve air quality in East Oakland. As traffic on major Bay Area freeways is our biggest source of air pollution, it will take the collective efforts of all of us to reduce our vehicle miles travelled, carpool and take transit.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District is committed to continuing to reduce air pollution in our most impacted communities.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses winds feed the fire. In Lakeview Terrace over 750 acres burn. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Vientos avivan el fuego

En Lakeview Terrace arden 750 acres; 1200 refugiados

Isaías Alvarado

La Opinión, Monday, October 13, 2008

Un año después, el fuego regresó a la Reserva Forestal Ángeles y calcinó por lo menos 750 acres, dos viviendas y tres casas móviles, y obligó a unos 1,200 residentes de los cañones López y Kagel, en Lakeview Terrace, a dejar sus hogares.

Hasta el cierre de esta edición, alrededor del 50% del incendio había sido contenido y, además de un bombero y un menor de edad que resultaron con problemas respiratorios, no se reportaron heridos de consideración.

Ron Harasol, portavoz del Departamento de Bomberos del Condado de Los Ángeles (LACFD), afirmó que se tenía "controlado" el fuego, que comenzó a las 2:00 de la mañana y cuyas causas permanecen bajo investigación.

Cabe señalar que algunos medios indicaron que el siniestro pudo haberse iniciado por la ráfaga de un arma y expandido por el viento.

El Servicio Forestal informó que unas 450 casas fueron desalojadas, cuando las llamas avanzaban rápidamente hacia el sureste, cerca del límite de la ciudad, por la maleza reseca que predomina en esa región.

Con la alerta de que fuertes vientos de Santa Ana podían avivar la conflagración durante la noche, alrededor de 800 bomberos luchaban por sofocarla, apoyados por aviones y helicópteros cisterna que se abastecían del lago Hansen.

"Fue un día largo para nosotros, empezamos a las 6:00 de la mañana", comentó un bombero de la estación 11 de Burbank, mientras rociaba una casa que terminó reducida a cenizas en Dexter County Park. Ahí dos vehículos también quedaron calcinados.

Las llamas no alcanzaron la vivienda contigua, habitada por la familia Connors desde hace seis meses. "A las 3:00 de la mañana empezaron a avisarnos que evacuáramos el lugar", comentó Janice Connors, al tiempo que un helicóptero sobrevolaba el área.

"Para mis vecinos fue la peor tragedia que les haya pasado. Apenas tienen un bebé recién nacido", lamentó.

Pero no todos obedecieron a las autoridades. Joe Connors se quedó para combatir el fuego que amenazaba su vivienda y fue testigo del final de las casas de otros residentes. "Cuando ese RV (vehículo de recreación) empezó a quemarse la altura de las llamas fue de hasta 30 pies", comentó sobre la casa móvil que se calcinó a tan sólo unos pasos de su vivienda.

La secundaria San Fernando fue habilitada como refugio temporal y debido a que en esa región se localizan algunos ranchos, los animales fueron trasladados al centro ecuestre Hansen Dam.

A Reyes Macías, originario de Zacatecas y residente del lugar, no le dio tiempo de sacar a todos sus animales. "Cuando me di cuenta estaban las llamas en la ventana de mi casa", dijo.

Como pudo, logró rescatar a siete caballos y cuatro vacas. "Los otros se quedaron", comentó.

Cerca de un retén que colocó el Departamento del Sheriff del condado a la entrada de Kagel Canyon Road, Manuel Macías se mostraba preocupado por el destino del resto de sus animales. "Uno siente feo, es con lo que nos divertimos en las charreadas", mencionó.

A lo largo del día, sólo vehículos de emergencia circulaban por el área, que lucía desierta. Algunos perros, que fueron dejados por sus amos para cuidar las propiedades, ladraban al paso de las unidades.

Arriba de la colina, Janice Connors, repuesta del susto, celebraba pequeños detalles como el regreso de la electricidad en su casa, que le indicaban el regreso a la normalidad, y afirmaba que la vida tenía que seguir: "No creo que este sea un lugar peligroso, son cosas que pasan por la naturaleza".

Abajo, Ángela Frisbie, quien se acercó preocupada a este medio para preguntar por la ubicación de las casas quemadas, decía que no se arrepentía de haberse mudado a esa ciudad hace apenas un mes.

"Es hermoso vivir en el cañón, el aire es puro, la gente es interesante y amigable", dijo antes de regresar a su auto, desde donde aplaudía a los camiones de bomberos que regresaban de su labor.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses fires in San Fernando Valley cause an alert due to poor air quality.](#)

Alertan por contaminación que generó nuevo incendio

El fuego había consumido por lo menos unos dos mil acres hasta esta mañana.

Manuel Ocaño

Noticier Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Monday, October 13, 2008

Un incendio que se desató el fin de semana y continúa en el Valle de San Fernando, al norte de Los Ángeles empeoró las condiciones de contaminación del aire.

Autoridades ambientales de California advirtieron que ese deterioro pudiera ser peligroso especialmente para la población considerada más vulnerable a la contaminación del aire: los niños y los ancianos.

Los principales consejos son permanecer en interiores y sólo salir si es muy necesario. Para quienes sufren enfermedades respiratorias es recomendable también estar en contacto con sus médicos.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Schwarzenegger asks investors that they continue to support growth in areas of alternative energy.](#)

Pide Schwarzenegger que se mantengan inversiones en energía alternativa

Manuel Ocaño, Noticier Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Friday, October 10, 2008

El gobernador de California, Arnold Schwarzenegger destacó que pese a las condiciones económicas en el país, la tecnología de energía alternativa permanece como una área de crecimiento, y descartó que haya razón para dejar de invertir en este sector.

La tecnología limpia mantiene inversión y contrataciones en momentos en que prácticamente cualquier otro sector de la economía se aletarga, dijo el gobernador.

Schwarzenegger habló al inaugurar una nueva generadora de energía solar que produce 2.1 megavatios de electricidad, una cantidad suficiente para consumo de unos 200 mil hogares.