

Hot Protest Kindled By Wood Burning Ban

By Patric Hedlund

Mountain Enterprise (weekly), Friday, Dec. 12, 2008

Steve Yusim of Lake of the Woods is hopping mad and ready to canvas the mountain with petitions.

Brian Bierman of Pinon Pines is setting up a website and has stepped up to help coordinate a protest.

Chuck Woerner of Frazier Park has been calling the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, television stations and newspapers to protest the ban on burning wood in our mountains when Bakersfield is having a bad air day.

No scientific justification for the ban has been presented, the men argue. It makes Woerner angry that bans on Frazier Park's "1,500 homes in 15 square miles at 5,000 foot elevation within our own microclimate" should be dictated by conditions 50 miles north on the valley floor. The SJVAPCD has more than tripled the number of "burn ban" days it is calling this year, based on air conditions in the San Joaquin Valley.

Previously there was a waiver allowing wood burning by those living in homes at altitudes above 3,500 feet. That waiver was removed in mid-October with almost no advance notice.

Woerner wrote a letter to Supervisor Ray Watson outlining his objections. Watson is the representative for this area on the SJVAPCD board. He voted for eliminating the waiver, on the premise that it could help the district meet state and federal air pollution standards.

Opponents say no air flow study has been presented to justify the board's notion that mountain wood smoke ever flows into the valley.

Now agency personnel appear to be back-pedaling on their explanation for the new policy. Yusim points to a recent interview in which a SJVAPCD public information officer said the ban will protect mountain residents from wood smoke. But Woerner replies that children and elders enduring cold homes because of the expense of gas heating also poses a major health hazard.

Yusim is furious that the ban came with no warning as winter is approaching, "after people have planned and budgeted all year to buy their wood." He says he knows an 85-year-old woman who can't afford to use only gas but is afraid to stay warm with the help of her wood stove. "You need to tell people that the first offense is a \$50 fine, but you can get that dismissed by going to a class on clean wood burning," he said in an interview Wednesday, Dec. 10.

The district points to scientific studies showing that fine particulate matter, called PM 2.5, is among the most harmful of air pollutants. It triggers asthma attacks and lung problems. The tiny particles can pass through the lungs and into the bloodstream, where they can clog arteries. Doctors have documented an increase in deaths from lung diseases, heart attacks and strokes on days when fine particle pollution is high.

Wood smoke contains such particles, it is true, but The San Joaquin Valley Air Initiative, a five-year plan developed by a coalition of business and civic groups in 2003, says that the primary source of the pollution in the San Joaquin Valley is from "mobile sources," and "while heavy-duty vehicles [diesel trucks] represent a small percentage of the total vehicle population, they generate a significant percentage of the nitrous oxide and PM emissions." Diesel trucks transporting goods along the Interstate 5 and Highway 99 corridors and agricultural activities in the San Joaquin Valley generate by far the largest quantities of PM 2.5.

Mountain residents such as Linda MacKay of Lebec, an activist for air quality improvements, say it is politically tough to tackle those entrenched economic interests. MacKay is skeptical the local ban will have any impact on improving the valley's problem. Still SJVAPCD says their burn ban goal is to meet stricter federal clean air standards for particulate matter pollution, which is most severe in the San Joaquin Valley during winter months.

Homes and businesses without natural gas or where wood burning is the sole source of heat are exempt from the wood burning ban. Propane is not considered 'natural gas' under this regulation.

Woerner and Yusim have been calling the air board's district office at (661) 326-6900, "but people need to call Supervisor Watson at (661) 868-3680," Yusim said, "We need to get him to renew the waiver until they have some proof that this is justified."

Yusim says he doubts that people in Fresno (where the head office of SJVAPCD is based) understand the rural nature of this region. He says there is a misunderstanding that "just because there is natural gas service in Frazier Park and parts of Lake of the Woods, they say this must be a 'high density population.' They're wrong, but Watson should know better. He cast the deciding vote to eliminate the waiver. He isn't representing our interests."

Yusim said he has asked to speak at the December 18 meeting of the air board. The meeting begins at 9 a.m. at 2700 M Street, Suite 275 in Bakersfield (www.valleyair.org). He said he hopes that Chuck Woerner and others will ask to speak too.

Brian Bierman said on Wednesday that by the weekend (December 13) he plans to have a web page established which will have a petition for mountain residents to download, print and circulate in their neighborhoods. **[UPDATE:** Bierman's new site, "No to No Burn" is now at <http://notonoburn.org/>].

He had not completed the petition language when we interviewed him on Wednesday, but had written something that sounds like a manifesto last week, as a rough draft. Here is an excerpt:

"The almost tyrannical pronouncement by the EPA and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD) that the Frazier Mountain Communities are subject to mandated "No-Burn Days" is an unreasonable imposition on residents for the following reasons:

The decision to impose on Frazier Mountain was made without representation. Our community did not get fair warning. SJVAPCD is exacerbating an already difficult situation. Residents budget their heating costs on the ability to burn firewood throughout the cold winter and have already purchased firewood for the season.

In addition, the following also apply: The imposition is determined by data irrelevant to the Frazier Mountain Communities....Data reporting particulate matter is gathered in Bakersfield which is over 40 miles away from our community and at a 3,000 - 4,000 foot elevation difference...."

Supercenter suit

By Eric Firpo

Tracy Press, Friday, December 12, 2008

A group has sued Tracy for its approval of Wal-Mart's request to add 70,000 square feet and sell groceries at its store on West Grant Line Road.

Tracy First, a group that has fought the expansion of the nation's biggest retailer, filed the lawsuit Nov. 2.

The lawsuit charges the city's report to gauge the environmental effects of a bigger Wal-Mart were "legally deficient," said Steve Herum of Herum and Crabtree, a Stockton law firm that represents Tracy First.

The lawsuit says the city study improperly defined how big the store would be by not including an 11,000-square-foot garden center and failed to evaluate and possibly cut air pollution, traffic, energy use and how it could spread urban rot in other shopping centers in Tracy.

The lawsuit asks a court to set aside the old study and force the city to write a new one.

Wal-Mart has been trying to add space for five years, and public debates draw throngs of impassioned supporters and critics.

Wal-Mart was built in 1993, and the company could have built a 163,000-square-foot store but built at 125,000 square feet instead. On Oct. 21, the City Council voted 3-1 to allow the store to add 70,000 square feet, of which roughly 30,000 will be devoted to groceries.

Fans of a Wal-Mart grocery store believe they'll save money there, while critics complain it will drive other grocery stores and other retail shopping centers out of business.

"I think it's detrimental to the city," said Marvin Rothschild, a Tracy First member who signed on to the lawsuit.

Wal-Mart spokesman Kevin Loscotoff scoffed at the idea that there was anything wrong with the city's environmental report, and said the city's work with the company in the past five years ended in "valid approval" of the environmental study.

"We've appreciated the support we've received," he said.

The lawsuit was hardly unexpected, and was in fact predicted by Councilman Steve Abercrombie when he voted to OK a bigger Wal-Mart.

Mayor Brent Ives said the city will likely defend itself against the suit, as it did when it beat a challenge to its approval of a WinCo grocery store.

"We think we did a good job with the (environmental impact report)," he said.

Sacramento trash-to-energy plan raises red flags

By Terri Hardy and Chris Bowman

Modesto Bee, Monday, December 15, 2008

Presented with a controversial and highly technical proposal to vaporize garbage into energy, Sacramento City Council members earlier this month wondered what other cities had found – and whether those lessons were being considered in Sacramento.

The plan's chief proponent, Councilwoman Lauren Hammond, said Friday that while she remains committed to working on a viable waste-to-energy plan for Sacramento, she believes the vetting process by the city's upper management was "done wrong."

"If we have to start all over, we start all over," Hammond said.

On Dec. 9, the council is scheduled to vote on whether to bind itself for decades to a company that vows to zap Sacramento's trash at the same price it would cost to bury it in a landfill.

Under the proposed deal, Sacramento-based U.S. Science & Technology and a consortium of energy and engineering companies would build a "plasma arc gasification" waste-to-energy plant at no cost to the city, then sell the energy for profit.

But a Bee review of two other municipalities that have considered the same technology – and evaluated proposals from companies involved in the Sacramento deal – raises several red flags:

- The effort is faltering financially in St. Lucie County, Fla. The developer there, GeoPlasma of Atlanta, has scaled back the proposed project by at least 80 percent.
- Los Angeles County rejected GeoPlasma's pitch at the outset, saying financial details and performance data were lacking.
- Environmental experts in both locales have questioned whether toxic metals would be filtered from the waste gas produced for sale to various energy buyers.

Process touted as clean, safe

The technology is alluring, scoring high in "gee-whiz" value and as an alternative to filling landfills. Gas heated to temperatures approaching those on the sun's surface vaporizes trash, producing a

synthetic fuel. Also, the residual molten glass and metals can be sold as filler for road and building construction.

U.S. Science & Technology has told Sacramento the technology has been used for decades in steel plants. The group portrays the process as safe and cleaner than many other alternatives.

"We don't just want to build a facility in Sacramento to address the problem on municipal waste," the company's president, William Ludwig, said recently. "We want to give Sacramento the opportunity to be in a leadership position solving environmental problems."

The deal before the City Council would have Sacramento relying on the company to process waste at a steady flow of 2,100 tons per week.

GeoPlasma, the energy company that would build and operate the St. Lucie County plant in Florida, told officials there that the process would empty the landfill in 20 years.

Troubles with Florida contract

That promise fell through before construction even began. Initially, the plant was to process 1,000 tons of garbage daily, gradually ramping up to 3,000 tons a day. In September, two years later, GeoPlasma announced that it would vaporize only 200 tons a day, said Chris Craft, a St. Lucie County commissioner.

The St. Lucie team also includes Alter NRG and its subsidiary, Westinghouse Plasma Corp., which would design the plant. (Alter NRG and Westinghouse are part of the Sacramento deal, and GeoPlasma once was listed as a partner here, too.)

Craft said revenue troubles, not technological ones, were rocking the deal there. For instance, he said, a plan for GeoPlasma to sell steam from the facility to a nearby Tropicana juice plant didn't materialize.

Now GeoPlasma is scrambling to find more customers for the energy and recyclable leftovers, Craft said, to keep its promise not to charge the county more than it pays for sending its trash to a landfill.

Lack of details sends up 'red flag'

In Sacramento, financial details have not been shared with the city. U.S. Science & Technology said it would not divulge that information until the council had approved a binding agreement – a demand City Councilman Steve Cohn, an attorney, recently called a "red flag."

Officials in Florida said they, too, have been in the dark, though they have not pressed for financial details.

"We don't care how they pay for it," Craft conceded. "They have to own it and finance it and operate it for 20 years. They've kept their cards close to their vest about this."

How thoroughly Sacramento city staff members have vetted U.S. Science & Technology's proposal is being probed by the City Council. After The Bee raised questions about financial ties between experts who testified before the council and companies behind the project, council members told Jim Rinehart, the city's economic development manager, to provide unbiased information.

Last year, the city issued a call for waste-to-energy proposals. A panel with members from the city and California State University, Sacramento, and University of California, Davis, evaluated the responses and focused on plasma arc gasification. Officials from the City Manager's Office, staffers from the Economic Development Department and City Council members viewed a small-scale plant in Japan, although that facility does not vaporize only garbage.

City Manager Ray Kerridge was not available Friday for an interview regarding the city's vetting process. Nor was Rinehart, who is acting as the city's point person on the project. In the past, Rinehart has said his staff has "absolutely" done thorough due diligence.

Councilman Rob Fong said that with more information to be presented, he believes the city is on the right track.

"We're very excited about the possibility of figuring out a clean way to get out of the landfill business – but we've got to do it right," Fong said. "In a perfect world, there would have been more discussion upfront. But the good news is that's happening now."

Firm's proposal too fuzzy for L.A.

Fuzzy financing was what kept GeoPlasma from advancing its pitch in Los Angeles County, according to Coby Skye, a county engineer who has analyzed a variety of alternative technologies.

On a scale of 0 to 100 set up by those reviewing the proposals, Skye said GeoPlasma scored 0 on "economics," 25 on "operational experience," 25 on "engineering the complete system" and 50 on "supplier credibility."

"The economic data supplied to us was not well detailed or supported," Skye said. "They had limited, pilot-scale experience managing municipal solid waste using their technology."

Over four years, Los Angeles County evaluated 28 suppliers of alternative waste technologies before settling on four of them to build pilot waste-to-energy plants, each using a different technology. Officials also selected potential sites for the plants and identified prospective energy buyers – all in preparation for county supervisors' vote on the plan, anticipated early next year.

The county sent no fewer than six representatives to inspect each of the four companies' pilot projects in Japan, Israel, Poland and England. Unlike Sacramento city officials' tour of a Japanese plant earlier this year, the Los Angeles delegation was all technical experts and no politicians.

Air regulations worry truckers

By Alex Breitler

Stockton Record, Friday, December 12, 2008

SACRAMENTO - A proposed \$5.5 billion air quality rule requiring the upgrade or replacement of big-rig engines has truckers across California pleading with the state to ease into the slow lane.

The California Air Resources Board is expected to consider the new rule today or Friday. In the meantime, hundreds of truck owners or operators say the rule is too costly - especially in this bad economy.

"This thing is going to be devastating if they pass it," said 60-year-old Sal DiSalvo of Stockton, an independent trucker for 35 years. "We all want cleaner air, but not at the expense of a total economic meltdown."

The goal of the rule is to cut emissions from 900,000 heavy-duty diesel trucks and buses that are registered in California or come here from out of state. A wide range of businesses - haulers, builders, bus lines, manufacturers and even mobile blood banks - would be affected.

The rule will save far more than it will cost, regulators say. It would prevent 9,400 premature deaths over the next decade, reduce asthma cases and improve productivity, ending with economic savings of \$48 billion to \$68 billion.

"I know the rule will cost money, but it also gives truck owners and drivers a chance to drive newer, cleaner vehicles and help the air at the same time," Mary Nichols, chairwoman of the air board, said in a statement.

The first-of-its-kind rule comes after 18 months of meetings with drivers and business owners and represents a "good balance" between the economy and the environment, she said.

Here's how it works: Starting in 2010, some trucks will need diesel filters. Then, starting in 2012, company owners must begin replacing their fleets with newer rigs that meet 2010 model year emissions standards. By 2023, all diesel vehicles on California roads must meet those standards.

Millions of dollars of assistance are available to help truckers upgrade, the state says. To pay the remainder, trucking companies likely will pass the costs onto their customers, the state says, resulting in a "negligible" price increase for common goods, such as food and produce.

Truckers say that while they support clean air, the economics are skewed.

Upgrading one of his two trucks with a filter would cost \$22,000, DiSalvo said. When he asked for financial help, he was told he could have \$5,000.

"I'm not going to spend \$17,000 on a truck that's worth \$30,000," he said. "I'll just wait until they tell me I cannot run my truck anymore, and I'll retire. I'll park it."

He believes that will occur at the end of 2012. It'd be an early retirement for DiSalvo, who said he'd planned to keep hauling construction materials as long as he could get up each morning.

At the larger end of the spectrum is Stockton-based Antonini Enterprises, which has already replaced about 60 percent of its fleet in anticipation of new regulations. The cost: \$2 million, said Jean Etcheverry, accounting manager for the company.

About 20 older trucks remain and would have to be replaced by 2015, Etcheverry said.

"We're having to absorb the cost of the trucks we've purchased already, and we haven't been able to raise rates" due to a weak economy and slim profits in agriculture, he said.

Many truckers are calling for a more flexible approach. DiSalvo's solution is simple: Allow old trucks to be phased out as they normally would and require cleaner technologies in the replacement vehicles. Diesel emissions are, in fact, projected to decrease by more than double even without the air board's proposed rule.

Nevertheless, public health advocates, including the American Lung Association, urged the state to move forward, warning that diesel pollution is taking a serious toll on Californians, especially children and the elderly - and the truckers themselves.

Mike Killingsworth of Modesto wrote a letter about the asthma attacks suffered by his 6-year-old grandson, Philip.

"Everybody wants an exemption from rules that cost money," Killingsworth wrote. "Why would we outlaw smoking in public places to protect health and not do the same for burning diesel?"

For more information about the California Air Resources Board diesel truck rule, visit www.arb.ca.gov.

Air board passes historic truck emissions rules

Capital Press Ag Weekly, Friday, December 12, 2008

The California Air Resources Board on Friday passed a landmark set of pollution rules that target diesel trucks. The board passed its emissions proposal on an 8-0 vote.

Over the course of a two-day hearing, the board heard testimony from nearly 300 stakeholders. Owners of small trucking operations delivered emotional pleas to the board, saying the rule would squeeze them out of business. Supporters gave equally emotional comments, asking for relief from air pollution that is seen as the reason for high rates of asthma and other disorders.

"There's no bigger (health) risk factor than when someone loses their job," said board member John Telles, a physician. "I don't think the state of California wants to put people out of business. I personally don't want to do that just from a health perspective."

Heavy-duty diesel trucks are among the largest generators of particulate matter and nitrogen oxides, an ozone-forming emission. Beginning in 2010, the proposed rule would apply a set of emissions-reducing requirements on trucking operations. It would initially require older trucks to be fitted with smog traps, and would require fleet modernizations between 2012 and 2023.

"We're not dealing with big corporate entities," Telles said. "(A large portion) of this group is guys that own one truck."

The board passed the measure with a handful of amendments, one of which would relax the initial upgrade deadline. The board also expressed concern that provisions for financial aid would need to be closely watched as the rule's deadlines approach.

"The proposed truck and bus regulations (amount to) the most significant emissions-reduction proposal that this board has considered in the last decade," said Mary Nichols, the board's chair.

The rule would allow exemptions to agricultural haulers, accounting for the fact that they operate seasonally. Based on model year and miles driven, the deadlines for ag-hauling trucks would be pushed back to 2017 at the earliest.

When the hearing started Thursday afternoon, truck drivers held signs on the sidewalk outside, showing opposition to the board's proposal.

"For a lot of us, it's ag," said Nathan Crum of Valley Pacific Petroleum. "That's really most of our business. Every dairyman, the only way they're going to get their fuel is from us."

Crum's sign urged consideration of an alternative proposal offered by Driving Toward a Cleaner California, a coalition of groups with a stake in the trucking business. The air board says DTCC's proposal would not sufficiently fill the state's clean-air mandates.

ARB staff said its proposed rules could substantially affect small businesses-in the trucking industry, defined by ownership of three or fewer trucks. Many hauling outfits both large and small, ARB says, will likely merge, cease operations or relocate.

More than \$1 billion has become available to help business owners cope with new rules, through legislative and ballot initiatives, Nichols said.

"Implementing the regulations will require a substantial investment on behalf of the many businesses that will be affected," Nichols said. "We know that today's economy is in a slump. But we also know that we have to keep in mind that the first compliance deadlines under this rule ... will not occur until 2010, and we hope that a recovery is well under way at that time."

Calif. cracks down on diesel emissions

By SAMANTHA YOUNG

Capital Press Ag Weekly, Friday, December 12, 2008

SACRAMENTO (AP) - A day after adopting a sweeping plan to reduce greenhouse gases, California air regulators on Friday, Dec. 12, will consider cracking down on pollution from nearly a million diesel trucks that crowd the state's highways each year.

The state Air Resources Board is expected to adopt what would be the country's most sweeping rule to get the dirtiest trucks and buses off the road, including those that travel into California from other states, Canada and Mexico.

The heavy-duty trucks that cart food, electronics, toys and other goods are the leading cause of diesel pollution in a state that has some of the smoggiest skies in the country.

"The health benefits of this rule are just enormous," Air Resources Board chairwoman Mary Nichols told The Associated Press. "We're talking about thousands of lives saved."

The regulation would require owners of some of the oldest and most polluting trucks, school buses, motor coaches and street sweepers to begin transforming their fleets as soon as 2010.

It is a critical element of California's strategy to clean up its smoggy skies and meet state and federal air standards. The new rules would reduce ozone-eating nitrogen oxides and soot-forming particulate matter that can become embedded in lung tissue.

The idea is to speed up the replacement of thousands of trucks and buses that are usually on the road for decades and are not as clean as newer model vehicles that have stricter emission standards mandated by the federal government.

If the rules are adopted, old diesel vehicles would have to be outfitted with pollution filters, new engines or replaced with newer, cleaner vehicles. The cost to businesses, school districts and transit agencies statewide is estimated at \$5.5 billion.

That's a price the trucking industry and others say they can't afford, since the recession has left many truck and bus owners struggling to pay the bills.

"With this economy, this puts us in an untenable position," said Robert Ramorino, president of the California Trucking Association, which wants more time to meet the proposed mandates.

Ramorino said he and many truck owners would be forced to replace relatively new trucks for which they are still paying. Meanwhile, others are concerned that financially strapped banks would be hesitant to loan them the money needed to buy a \$150,000 truck that meets the strict emission standards.

"Banks have put freezes on truck loans and require much more down," said Robert Tennes, a salesman at the Western Truck Center in West Sacramento.

Regulators point out that the costs will be spread over 16 years and say they are dwarfed by the estimated \$48 billion to \$68 billion in health benefits to Californians who currently breathe diesel fumes.

By the time the regulation is fully implemented in 2023, regulators estimate the amount of diesel particulate matter and nitrogen oxides emitted from these vehicles would be cut by about a third.

The two pollutants can lead to premature death and increased asthma and heart attacks. The proposed rule is projected to prevent 9,400 premature deaths, 150,000 asthma-related cases and 950,000 lost work days over 20 years, according to an analysis by the board.

"This is costing billions of dollars in health impacts," said Kathryn Phillips, an air quality specialist at the Environmental Defense Fund. "There's a lot of motivation to do this rule, and there will likely be other states looking at either adopting it or some variation."

An Air Resources Board staff report predicts many businesses would pass the costs to their customers through higher shipping rates or higher prices for manufactured goods but says the effect on consumers would be negligible. For example, a pair of shoes might cost about 1 to 2 cents more, and a pound of produce would cost only a fraction of a cent more.

In addition, the state has several loan programs and bond money to help businesses replace their fleets although the bond money could only be used for trucks that operate solely in California.

The rules would apply to tractor trailers, dump trucks, street sweepers, cranes, fuel delivery trucks, school buses, motor coaches and airport shuttles. Some agricultural vehicles would be given additional time to comply.

Military tactical support vehicles, emergency vehicles, private motor homes, snow plows and historic vehicles would be among those exempted from the requirements. Vehicles that are driven fewer than 1,000 miles and less than 100 hours also would be exempt.

Vehicles that travel within 20 rural counties that already meet air quality standards would not be required to lower their nitrogen oxide emissions until 2021. Those counties include: Alpine, Colusa, Del Norte, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Lassen, Mendocino, Modoc, Monterey, Plumas, San Benito, San Luis Obispo, Santa Cruz, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Trinity, Tehama and Yuba.

Amid trucker protests, state adopts tough diesel-emission rules

Staff and wire reports

Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Saturday, Dec. 13, 2008

SACRAMENTO — California adopted the nation's toughest diesel emission standards Friday for trucks and buses.

The state Air Resources Board unanimously approved the new rule despite warnings that it could cause many of California's small trucking companies to stop operating.

Kelly Kyle of Faulkner Trucking Co. in Tulare used a mild expletive to describe the new rules and added: "They just put literally thousands of people out of work."

The regulation comes one day after the board adopted a sweeping plan to reduce the state's greenhouse gases, which is expected to change everything from the way factories operate to the fuel Californians put in their vehicles.

Starting in 2011, the diesel rules will speed up the replacement of thousands of polluting trucks and buses that stay on the road for decades and are not as clean as newer models with tougher, federally mandated emissions standards.

More than 250 witnesses jammed the board's meeting during two days of testimony on the rule.

Schoolchildren from Oakland, farmworkers and physicians from the San Joaquin Valley and representatives from environmental groups urged regulators to adopt the diesel rule.

Truckers, loggers, independent dump truck and bus drivers and representatives of rural counties demanded the board delay what they called prohibitive regulations during a worsening economic recession.

Air regulators estimated the emissions standards would cost businesses, school districts and transit agencies \$5.5 billion over 16 years.

That's a cost many small- and medium-sized trucking companies said they could not afford.

Ron Faulkner, president of Faulkner Trucking, estimated it would cost him \$7 million to replace 26 of his 35 aging trucks by 2014. He said he doesn't know if he can afford it, because his company only turns a profit of \$50,000 a year.

"If this goes through, we'll probably close our doors," said Faulkner, who bought his first truck in 1988. "I've worked hard to build this to where it's at, and they're going to tear it down."

Jim Ganduglia of Ganduglia Trucking of Fresno said Air Resources Board members had lots of questions that he didn't believe were fully answered, but they voted for the new rules anyway.

"They had all kinds of questions and they still voted on it," he said in disgust. "If there are any problems that come up, they'll fix them later. I think it stinks."

Critics also questioned whether technology being developed to cut nitrogen oxides would be ready in time.

The heavy-duty trucks that cart food, electronics, toys and other goods are the leading cause of diesel pollution in a state with some of the worst pollution in the country. The new rules will reduce ozone-eating nitrogen oxides and soot-forming particulate matter that can become embedded in lung tissue.

Who the rule applies to

Nearly a million vehicles will have to be replaced or retrofitted with smog traps, filters or cleaner-burning technology beginning in 2011. By 2014, all trucks must have soot filters, and by the time the rule is fully implemented in 2023, no truck or bus in California can be older than 13 years unless it has equipment to cut nitrogen oxide emissions. Generally, the rule applies to any vehicle

larger than a double-wheel Ford F-350 truck, including those that come to California from other states, Canada and Mexico.

Tractor trailers, dump trucks, street sweepers, cranes, fuel delivery trucks, school buses, motor coaches and airport shuttles all must comply.

Some military, emergency and vintage vehicles would be exempt, along with private motor homes, snow plows and those driven fewer than 1,000 miles a year. Vehicles in rural counties that meet federal air standards and some agricultural vehicles will get extra time to comply. Vehicles used exclusively in agricultural operations are excluded.

Regulators said the costs will be spread over 16 years and businesses could pass them on to customers. A staff report estimated consumers would see negligible effects such as 1 cent to 2 cents for a pair of shoes or a fraction of a cent extra for a pound of produce.

State officials said the cost is outweighed by an estimated \$48 billion to \$69 billion in health benefits for Californians who breathe diesel fumes.

Programs could help

The state also has several loan programs and bond money to help businesses replace their fleets.

The board directed its staff to report back in a year on the economic effects of the regulation and look for more ways businesses could get state funds.

It also gave small companies an extra year to meet the regulations — a step some environmental groups complained would delay the health benefits of the rule.

Board scientists estimate the amount of diesel particulate matter and nitrogen oxides emitted would be cut by about a third by 2023, preventing 9,400 premature deaths over 20 years, 150,000 asthma-related cases and 950,000 lost work days.

Regulators also adopted another rule requiring long-haul truckers to install aerodynamic devices and low-rolling tires on trucks and trailers to help cut greenhouse gas emissions.

That will change the look of an estimated 436,000 trucks and more than a million trailers at a cost of \$10.4 billion. Regulators say the change will save about \$14.7 billion in fuel, but several trucking companies disputed the board's calculations.

Drivers at Save Mart Supermarkets, for example, travel an average of 45.7 mph, far below the 62 mph standard the board used to calculate the projected fuel savings, said Daniel Miller, a Save Mart vice president.

Adding aerodynamic fixtures to large trailers also could make it hard for deliveries at narrow loading docks, he said.

"It will force us to replace our 53-foot trailers with smaller trucks, and then we're running more loads and consuming more fuel and creating more greenhouse gases," Miller said.

- Sacramento correspondent Jake Henshaw and the Associated Press contributed to this story.

Additional Facts -- ON THE NET

- California Air Resources Board: www.arb.ca.gov

Air board acts over objections

Pollution-control regulations are too tough, truckers say

By E.J. Schultz - Bee Capitol Bureau
Saturday, December 13, 2008

SACRAMENTO -- California regulators Friday approved landmark rules for heavy-duty trucks and buses aimed at curbing air pollution and gases that contribute to global warming.

The Air Resources Board acted despite objections by truckers in the Central Valley and elsewhere who say they can't afford to buy the smog controls or new rigs during a recession.

But environmentalists and the valley's top air regulator praised the move as a necessary step to meet federal pollution targets.

"There's no way the valley could come into attainment ... without this rule," said Seyed Sadredin, executive director of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

The diesel rules will speed up the replacement of thousands of polluting trucks and buses that stay on the road for decades and are not as clean as newer models that have tougher, federally mandated emissions standards.

Nearly a million vehicles will have to be replaced or retrofitted with smog traps, filters or cleaner-burning technology beginning in 2011. By 2014, all trucks must have soot filters, and by the time the rule is fully implemented in 2023, no truck or bus in California could be older than 13 years unless it had equipment to cut nitrogen oxide emissions.

Big diesel trucks are a major contributor to smog and soot pollution. Most of the trucks and buses on the road today have few emission controls or none, according to the Air Resources Board.

Low-mileage agriculture vehicles and specialty farm vehicles have later deadlines to comply, but all the trucks must meet the standard by 2023. The rules also call for school buses made before April 1, 1977, to be off the road by 2012.

State will save billions

The regulations will cost the trucking industry \$5.5 billion, according to air board estimates. But supporters said the state will save many more billions of dollars in health-care costs, especially in the valley, one of the nation's dirtiest air basins.

The board separately approved rules aimed at curbing greenhouse gases by increasing fuel efficiency. The regulation applies to tractors pulling box trailers 53 feet or longer. Beginning in 2010, equipment with model year 2011 or older must include fuel-efficient technology, such as aerodynamic devices to reduce wind drag.

Truckers unleashed a fierce lobbying campaign against the rules.

"The costs are astronomical. Nobody can survive it. Most businesses are going to be out of business," said Jim Gandulgia, owner of a trucking company in Fresno.

Protests from truckers dominated the two-day hearing. But clean-air activists also made their pleas to the board.

The Merced-Mariposa County Asthma Coalition took a group to testify at the Sacramento hearing. Melissa Kelly-Ortega, a program associate and Merced resident who has two children with asthma, said the truck rule gives "a glimmer of hope that our children will be able to breathe clean air."

Fuel savings a plus

Truckers pushed for an alternate proposal that would give them more time to comply. But air board chairwoman Mary Nichols said the delays would keep the state from meeting federal clean-air deadlines.

Larger trucking firms are expected to have an easier time complying than smaller operators.

Richard Raham, general manager for Dot Foods Inc. in Modesto, said the Illinois-based food distributor already has the filters on most of its trucks in California and is moving forward with upgrading the rest.

The company runs 660 trucks in the nation and also will comply with the measures to improve mileage and reduce greenhouse gases, he said.

"It is going to be costly, but if it can increase fuel economy savings, we can see the benefits of it," Raham said.

Fred Burtschi, owner of an agricultural trucking firm in Riverbank, expected it will cost up to \$90,000 to put the emission controls on six of his trucks with older diesel engines.

"What they are trying to implement on the trucks is crazy," he said. "They have trouble retrofitting the trucks to comply and the engines are not designed to handle the extra load. The fuel mileage has gone down 10 percent on those (retrofitted trucks)."

The board agreed to some minor changes, including allowing owners who are downsizing fleets to earn more time to meet targets on their remaining trucks. Also, the board promised to take a fresh look at the rules at the end of next year, including examining the economic fallout.

More than \$1.5 billion in state grants and loans are available for the upgrades, but truckers say that's not enough.

The Associated Press and Modesto Bee staff writer Ken Carlson contributed to this report.

California adopts tough diesel emission standards

By SAMANTHA YOUNG, The Associated Press

In the Bakersfield Californian, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Saturday, Dec. 13, 2008

California, a state plagued by smoggy skies and rising asthma rates, adopted the nation's toughest diesel emission standards Friday for the trucks and buses that crowd its highways.

The state Air Resources Board approved the rule despite warnings it could shut down many small trucking companies in the state. Many of them rely on the older, dirtier vehicles targeted by the change.

The regulation comes one day after the board adopted a sweeping plan to reduce the state's greenhouse gases, which is expected to change everything from the way factories operate to the fuel Californians put in their vehicles.

Starting in 2011, the diesel rules will speed up the replacement of thousands of polluting trucks and buses that typically stay on the road for decades and are not as clean as newer models that have tougher, federally mandated emissions standards.

Board chairwoman Mary Nichols said California has a legal obligation to clean up pollution and meet federal air standards. Failing to meet those targets could cost the state an estimated \$2 billion in federal transportation funding.

Air regulators estimate the emissions standards would cost businesses, school districts and transit agencies \$5.5 billion over 16 years.

Many trucking companies say they cannot afford to comply.

Ron Faulkner, president of Tulare-based Faulkner Trucking, estimated it would cost him \$7 million to replace 26 of his 35 aging trucks by 2014. He said he doesn't know if he can afford it, since his company only turns a profit of \$50,000 a year.

"I've worked hard to build this to where it's at and they're going to tear it down," he said.

Nearly a million vehicles will have to be replaced or retrofitted with smog traps, filters or cleaner-burning technology beginning in 2011. By 2014, all trucks must have soot filters, and by the time the rule is fully implemented in 2023, no truck or bus in California will be allowed to be older than 13 years unless it has equipment to cut nitrogen oxide emissions.

State officials said the compliance cost is outweighed by an estimated \$48 billion to \$69 billion in health benefits for Californians afflicted with illnesses caused by breathing diesel fumes.

The state also has several loan programs and bond money to help businesses replace their fleets.

California brings heavy-duty diesels under clean air rules

By Chris Bowman

Sacramento Bee, Saturday, December 13, 2008

Against the backdrop of recession, the state's smog-fighting Air Resources Board on Friday ordered owners of all heavy-duty diesel trucks to install soot traps on exhaust pipes of older, high-polluting rigs or take them off the road, starting in 2011.

The 8-0 decision, together with a strategy adopted Thursday for slashing global warming emissions from all tailpipes and industry exhaust vents amount to the most sweeping and costly measures in the state's 40-year history of air pollution control.

Unlike the climate-change restrictions, the diesel rules will have more immediate and palpable effects on the economy of California and the health of its 38 million residents.

Air Board Chairwoman Mary Nichols called the regulations a "giant step forward" in the state's long fight against unhealthy air. But she also acknowledged the financial burden of compliance, particularly for independent single-vehicle haulers.

"We worked very hard on these regulations to make sure we give enough time and flexibility for the smallest of operators to comply," Nichols said in a media briefing after the vote. "But the bottom line is that this is an industry that has an enormous health impact on the people of this state."

Under the rules, the stink and smudge of diesel that fouled California's skies for more than 60 years will be virtually gone by 2023, when the rules take full effect. The vast majority of trucks will be running with 95 percent cleaner engines by 2020, air board officials said.

Public health advocates celebrated the decision.

"The board just saved over 9,000 lives," said an excited Bonnie Holmes-Gen, a lobbyist for American Lung Association of California, referring to the state's estimate of deaths the diesel regulations would prevent from 2011 to 2025.

Nichols has called diesel pollution a "silent killer" because the ultrafine, windblown specks in fresh diesel exhaust can penetrate more deeply into lungs than ordinary dust and even enter the bloodstream, triggering death among people with cardiovascular troubles.

But many in the trucking, construction and grocery industries said the costly rules couldn't come at a worse time.

They said the recession coupled with the impending diesel restrictions already has devalued older trucks to the point that banks won't accept them as collateral. As a result, many trucks owners said they can't qualify for loans to buy more modern, cleaner trucks or even the soot traps, which can cost up to \$10,000.

"Residential construction is down 70 percent. Commercial construction is down 40 percent. Now you're asking truckers to take on debt," said Bruce Wick, spokesman for the California Professional Association of Specialty Contractors.

Many truckers said the rules would force them out of business.

In response, air board members gave truck owners an extra year before the rules would take effect and allowed them to delay a year on bringing a truck into compliance for every dirty one they retire.

"There's no bigger health risk than losing one's job," said Dr. John Telles, a board member and physician. "The reason to do this is to improve the health of Californians, not to make it worse."

Friday's vote followed more than 15 hours of testimony from truckers hauling everything from gravel to bee colonies and dozens who suffer asthma, including high school students from Oakland and Fremont who live and play near heavily traveled freeways.

Nearly 300 people spoke during the two-day hearing at the air board's headquarters in downtown Sacramento. That is the highest participation of any hearing in the agency's history, Nichols said.

The big-rig trucks, large delivery trucks and airport shuttle buses are the last of the diesel-powered vehicles and equipment to come under the soot-cutting knife of the air board, following similar rules for garbage trucks, municipal buses and off-road construction and farming vehicles and equipment.

But the number of these heavy-duty vehicles, along with their heavy weight, high mileage and longevity, makes them the single largest source of toxic air pollution in California, air board officials said.

The regulations will dramatically cut emissions of tiny diesel exhaust particles and smog-forming nitrogen oxides from more than 400,000 diesel vehicles registered in the state and another 500,000 out-of-state trucks that pass through California each year.

In 1998, the board declared the particles in diesel exhaust a "toxic air contaminant" because of their potential to cause cancer and premature heart- and lung-related deaths in adults.

Port air pollution riles regulators, neighbors

By Denis Cuff

Contra Costa Times, Tri-Valley Herald and other papers, Saturday, December 13, 2008

Community groups and clean air advocates and regulators were counting on big commitments from the Port of Oakland this fall to slash diesel truck pollution that has contributed to a higher cancer risk in West Oakland.

Now they are fuming, saying the city-owned seaport has pulled back rather than pay out for cleaner air, and public health as well as the port's long term financial health may suffer as a result.

The tensions are ramping up as ports and truckers struggle to meet new California pollution requirements in the midst of hard economic times sweeping over the shipping industry.

Oakland port commissioners voted Nov. 19 to indefinitely postpone a planned \$5 million contribution to a government pool of grants for owners of old trucks to install diesel soot filters required by the state for trucks that want to keep visiting ports after Jan. 1, 2010.

Without enough clean trucks, port business could be severely disrupted, air quality regulators say, because hundreds of the 2,000 trucks that use the port are believed to need pollution upgrades.

Port commissioners also postponed a Dec. 2 vote on a master plan to cut port pollution, and a container fee that would make companies that ship the goods pay millions of dollars annually to finance pollution reduction measures for diesel trucks, ships and trains.

'Pulling back'

"We see the port as essentially pulling back from their commitments to deliver cleaner air," said Jack Broadbent, chief executive officer of the nine-county Bay Area Air Quality Management District. "We are extremely disappointed that the port did not follow through."

One environmental leader was harsher.

"These delays in reducing pollution protect the interests of shipping companies and their customers, like Wal-Mart and Costco, at the expense of public health in Oakland," said Brian Beveridge, co-director of the West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project.

Port officials said the troubled economy is hitting the shipping industry so hard that the port, a landlord for many interrelated maritime businesses, has a fiscal responsibility to reassess how it spends to reduce pollution.

"We haven't in any way abandoned our commitments to air quality," said Richard Sinkoff, the port's manager of environmental programs and planning. "The central issue for the port is its financial health and making sure that the benefits from it can accrue."

The port is the region's biggest concentrated source of diesel soot, which can penetrate deep into the lungs and contribute to a variety of health problems, including asthma, cancer and heart disease, regulators say.

In March, the California Air Resources Board released a risk analysis that concluded the 22,000 residents of West Oakland face a cancer risk some three times higher than the rest of the Bay Area because of air pollution, much of it from traffic on local roads and freeways, but some from port traffic. The pollution also escalates cancer risk to a lesser degree in much of western Alameda and Contra Costa counties, officials said.

Pool created

Vowing to cut pollution risks quickly, the California Air Resources Board, the Bay Area air pollution district and the port each planned to chip in \$5 million to create a \$15 million pool for grants to clean up diesel truck models from 1994 to 2003. The maximum grant would be up to \$15,000 per truck for soot filters that can cost up to \$20,000, leaving a large share for truckers to pick up.

The grant program will go ahead, but if the \$5 million in port money is not restored, fewer trucks will receive help to upgrade,

When they balked at approving the money last month, port commissioners discussed the dark cloud over port finances, and a dispute arose about who should bear the burden of truck filter costs not covered by grants.

Some of the many independent truckers who do business at the port complained the filter costs are an extreme hardship on their modest incomes.

To solve the problem, the truckers and Teamsters union representatives have urged the port commission to require trucking companies to put the independent truckers on their payroll as full-time employees. If that is done, it's up to the trucking companies to absorb the costs.

But other truckers have told the port commission they want to remain contractors to keep their freedom as independent businessmen, even if it means absorbing the cost to clean up trucks. As independent contractors, the truckers cannot legally be organized by labor unions.

The labor issue remains unresolved as the port waits for a study to be issued next year on how to address the truckers' status.

In the meantime, air pollution officials said they are growing more anxious that trucks using the port may not be ready for the 2010 deadline to clean up.

"We need the port to show leadership instead of coming up with more reasons for delays," said Mark Ross, a Martinez city councilman on the Bay Area air pollution board. "They have lagged behind Southern California ports in cleaning up."

Port officials acknowledge they are concerned about the clean truck deadline, but they said that some cargo owners are considering giving financial assistance for truck upgrades or replacements.

"I think we'll hear more about partners that are receptive to helping," said Tim Leong, a port environmental scientist.

"They understand that operating green is part of doing business at the port."

Second Front Page

Valley Voice Newspaper, Monday, December 15, 2008

The state Air Resources Board is backing off a proposal to require automobile companies apply paint that is more reflective. The board decided the technology is not available to require that 65 percent of the infrared solar energy impinging on the painted or coated surface be reflected, beginning with the 2012 model-year.

Irvine awarded for green energy program

City leaders accept state award for energy program they say has saved residents and businesses approximately \$500,000 annually.

By Sean Emery

The Orange County Register, Sunday, Dec. 14, 2008

IRVINE – As economic worries have residents and business owners focused on making every dollar count, the city of Irvine is celebrating the success of an environmental program they say has saved the community approximately \$500,000 in annual energy costs.

City leaders will accept a state "Flex Your Power" award for the Community Energy Partnership program today. Officials say the partnership has distributed nearly 70,000 energy-efficient, Compact Fluorescent Light bulbs (CFLs), and has reduced approximately one million pounds of greenhouse gas emissions annually, the equivalent of taking about 250 cars off the road.

City officials attribute the program's success to a renewed interest in environmentalism among residents and consumers.

"It's good for you, it's good for your health, and it will help you save money," said Brian Fisk, the city's planning and redevelopment manager. "It's more about offering carrots than hitting people with sticks."

Along with offering the free light bulbs, officials also helped small businesses and residents find energy-efficient "tune-ups," items that can be turned off, and ways to cut back by studying power bills. Mayor Sukhee Kang was among those who invited the tune-up team into his home, resulting in an energy bill that he says dropped by more than \$50.

"It takes some education, it takes some outreach, because we have to let them know what the benefit will be to them," Kang said. "In the end we will all benefit together."

The push for local energy efficiency comes as federal leaders, most notably President-elect Barack Obama, talk of tying an economic recovery to environmental restoration. In a recent radio address on economic stimulus plans, Obama suggested replacing old heating systems and installing efficient light bulbs in federal buildings and schools.

In Irvine, officials are pushing new developments toward higher environmental standards. The city's largest developer, the Irvine Co., has agreed to meet the community's green building standards in all future projects, officials said, while Lennar Corp. has agreed to meet top environmental standards in its Great Park Neighborhoods project.

The Hines office project, a large scale office and retail project recently approved by city planners, is described by city officials as a model for environmental design they hope will set the stage for future mixed-use projects in the Irvine Business Complex. The project includes a central open space area known as "the green," surrounded by a half-dozen buildings angled to draw maximum power from the sun.

"The public has definitely turned toward the idea of a more environmentally sensitive world," Fisk said. "They see that as the right thing to do, and it will probably make it easier to rent, since there will be (energy) savings to the tenants."

City officials are currently calculating the community's emissions levels, hoping to create a computerized model that could be updated as new projects came along, and studied to find ways to reduce waste.

"Before we go out to ask the business community to switch over to these things, we want to do it ourselves," Fisk said.

NM files suit against Marathon Oil

By Susan Montoya Bryan, Associated Press Writer
Contra Costa Times, Friday, Dec. 12, 2008

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.—The New Mexico Environment Department sued Houston-based Marathon Oil Corp. on Friday over thousands of alleged air emissions violations at its plant in southeastern New Mexico.

The department accused Marathon of violating its permit and the state Air Quality Control Act. The lawsuit encompasses more than 4,000 alleged violations that stem from the operation of Marathon's Indian Basin natural gas processing plant west of Carlsbad.

Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry said Marathon has put air quality and the health of local residents at risk by failing to properly operate and calibrate required emission control equipment.

"Operating a gas plant without calibrating your monitors is like driving a car with a broken speedometer. You don't know to what extent you are putting the welfare of others at risk," Curry said in a statement.

The 23-page lawsuit was filed in state district court in Santa Fe.

Lee Warren, a spokeswoman for Marathon, said the company was disappointed with the state's action. She said compliance issues raised in the complaint have been addressed and that Marathon's commitment to corporate responsibility and to the environment is of the utmost importance.

"We're firmly committed to conducting our operations responsibly and in a manner that protects and preserves the environment," she said.

According to the Environment Department, the Indian Basin plant is considered a major source of air pollution and is required to meet strict air emissions limits to protect air quality and human health.

The lawsuit lists excess emission violations during at least 191 flaring events and more than 2,000 violations for failing to maintain proper calibration of required emission control equipment.

The lawsuit also accuses Marathon of violating sulfur dioxide and sulfur emission limits and failing to comply with required standards for storage of volatile organic liquids.

Under state law, each violation can be punishable with a civil penalty of up to \$15,000 per day.

Warren called the fines "overtly excessive" and argued that Marathon already has addressed the alleged violations, including concerns over calibration, by making operational changes at the plant and manually checking emissions systems on a weekly basis.

"There was no evidence of exceedences or impacts to the environment," Warren said.

The state said the lawsuit was a result of failed negotiations with Marathon over a notice of violation that was issued in 2008.

Warren acknowledged that Marathon had been working with the department for some time to address the alleged violations and that the process was "very long and burdensome with undue delays."

However, Warren and Curry both said they would be willing to work together to resolve the matter.

On the Net:

Marathon Oil Corp.: <http://www.marathon.com/>

New Mexico Environment Department: <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/>

EPA Issues Exemptions for Hazardous Waste, Factory Farms

By R. Jeffrey Smith

Washington Post Staff, Saturday, December 13, 2008

The Environmental Protection Agency issued a new regulation yesterday exempting an estimated 118,500 tons of hazardous waste annually from strict federal incineration controls, and it separately exempted factory farms from a requirement to report hazardous air pollution to the federal government.

The two rules are among dozens of regulations being issued during the final weeks of the Bush administration after lengthy internal deliberations and public controversy.

The hazardous waste exemption was proposed in June 2007 and approved by the White House three weeks after the presidential election. It allows companies that create hazardous chemical wastes in industrial processes to burn them as fuel in their own incinerators, instead of paying highly regulated incineration firms to destroy them.

Susan Bodine, EPA's assistant administrator for solid waste and emergency response, said in a prepared statement that "this action recognizes that [such wastes] . . . should be managed as a commodity valued for its energy content." She said the rule eliminates unnecessary regulation and promotes "energy recovery" without sacrificing human health or the environment.

The rule expands a previous EPA exemption for wastes that are chemically identical to fossil fuels so that it covers other wastes that produce similar emissions. James Berlow, director of the EPA's hazardous waste minimization and management division, said that an estimated 34 affected companies will be subject to high penalties if the toxic compounds are not fully destroyed. An agency spokeswoman said it would affect less than 1 percent of all hazardous wastes.

But Ben Dunham, associate legislative counsel for the nonprofit advocacy group Earthjustice, said that "everything about this rulemaking was flawed," including "the logic that says, 'If you can burn it, it's not a hazardous waste.'" He said it would allow firms with poor environmental records "to simply throw their hazardous waste in the company boiler" and burn it without strict monitoring, sometimes in populated areas.

The regulation covering factory farms, which exempts them from a federal reporting requirement first enacted 28 years ago, was proposed last December and approved by the White House on Thursday. But Barry Breen, the EPA's deputy assistant administrator for solid waste and emergency response, noted that the agency's original proposal -- which would also have exempted factory farms from reporting to state and local authorities -- was modified to cover only reports to the EPA.

Breen said that forcing farms to tell the EPA about emissions of ammonia or hydrogen sulfide from manure pits or other farm operations was unnecessary because "there's no way our responders can deal with that. We deal with train wrecks, explosions, fires in buildings. We just don't need the notice" from farms.

Local authorities said, however, that they still wanted to know about the sources of emissions that might cause respiratory problems or deaths, and their views prevailed.

US agency exempts farms from reporting toxic fumes

Associated Press

Capital Press Ag Weekly, Friday, December 12, 2008

WASHINGTON (AP) - U.S. farms no longer have to report to authorities the toxic, smelly fumes released from manure.

The Bush administration late Friday completed a regulation exempting farms from reporting releases of hazardous air pollution to federal, state and local authorities. The rule applies specifically to the gases from manure that are often responsible for odor problems.

The Environmental Protection Agency said that the changes will allow responders to focus on spills and releases that require their attention. But environmentalists say the rule will make it difficult to track air pollution problems at farms.

Large farms with hundreds of dairy cows or thousands of pigs will still have to report to local and state authorities.

EPA exempts farms from reporting toxic fumes

By Dina Cappiello, Associated Press Writer

Contra Costa Times, N.Y. Times and other papers, Friday, Dec. 12, 2008

WASHINGTON—The nation's farms no longer have to report to authorities the toxic, smelly fumes released from manure.

The Bush administration issued a regulation Friday exempting farms from reporting releases of hazardous air pollution from animal waste to federal, state and local authorities. The rule applies specifically to the gases from manure that are often responsible for odor problems.

Environmental Protection Agency officials said that the changes will allow responders to focus on spills and releases from factories, natural disasters and other emergencies that require urgent attention. They said it would also reduce reporting burdens on America's farmers, saying it is difficult to estimate the pollution coming from "a herd of cows."

"When there is a train wreck, we need to know about it because we need to go out and look at chemical spills," said Barry Breen, director of the agency's Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response. "When there is a lagoon full of manure there is nothing our folks can do when they show up."

The farm reporting rule is one of several eleventh-hour environmental regulations unveiled by the Bush administration this week that were lobbied for by industry. The Interior Department on Thursday issued revised rules loosening protections for endangered species. And the EPA, also on Friday, issued regulations exempting industrial solvents and other chemicals that can be burned for fuel from the strict regulations governing hazardous waste.

Environmentalists lashed out again, saying that the new reporting rule would make it difficult to keep track of farms polluting the environment and putting neighbors at risk.

The gases released when animal waste decomposes include hydrogen sulfide, with its characteristic rotten egg smell, and ammonia. Exposure to these chemicals can cause respiratory problems and irritate the eyes, nose and throat.

"The effect of this is to create a loophole for all operations for not report their toxic emissions to the federal government," said Ed Hopkins of the Sierra Club. "If you don't know there is a problem you aren't going to get a solution."

Representatives of the poultry and beef industries said Friday the rule was long overdue. In 2005, associations representing chicken, turkey and egg farmers asked the Bush administration to exempt all ammonia emissions from reporting requirements.

The rule finalized Friday covers gases just from animal waste. Large farms with hundreds of dairy cows or thousands of pigs would still be required to report air releases to local and state authorities.

"We have always felt that reporting requirements ... were never meant to address the release of naturally occurring substances," said the National Chicken Council, National Turkey Federation and U.S. Poultry & Egg Association in a statement. "We believe the EPA heard our concerns and has come to a reasonable compromise."

Congress also wanted clarification. In appropriations bills passed in 2005 and 2006, it directed the EPA to revisit the regulations.

Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, who chairs the Agriculture Committee, said that the EPA "needed to formulate a common-sense answer which recognizes that animal production is not the same as a chemical factory."

But he criticized the Bush administration for pushing out the rule before a two-year, \$14 million study launched last year on toxic air pollution from farms was finished.

The timing of the rule "almost guarantees that the issue will be revisited by the new administration and Congress," Harkin said.

Associated Press writer Mary Clare Jalonick contributed to this report.

On the Net: Environmental Protection Agency: <http://www.tinyurl.com/62ukba>

Britain's Benn cast doubts on Heathrow expansion

By David Stringer, Associated Press Writer

In the Merced Sun-Star, Contra Costa Times and other papers, Sunday, Dec. 14, 2008

LONDON An expansion of London's Heathrow airport shouldn't be authorized without proof major improvements can be made in cutting pollution, Environment Minister Hilary Benn was quoted as saying Sunday.

The Sunday Times quoted Benn as saying that Benn a planned third runway probably shouldn't be built before airport operators can show they will hit targets to improve air quality and reduce noise.

the expansion may not be compatible with European Union rules on cutting air pollution, he added - the first time a British Cabinet minister has publicly cast doubt on the plans.

Transport Secretary Geoff Hoon this month delayed a final decision on whether the extra runway will be built until January, saying he needed more time to consider arguments from advocates and those opposed to the expansion.

"We have to achieve the environmental objectives. We have to honor that commitment and I am determined that we will," Benn was quoted as saying. "We have a problem with nitrogen dioxide around Heathrow, principally because of the traffic. Some of it is the aircraft."

Benn said that Britain has an opt-out from EU air pollution directives until 2015, but must reduce nitrogen dioxide levels in the air following that date.

Some British officials favor building a new airport rather than expanding Heathrow. London's Mayor Boris Johnson has suggested a new site in the Thames River estuary, east of London.

Heathrow is Europe's busiest airport and operator BAA Ltd. says it needs a third runway by 2020 to cope with increased demand.

However, BAA said that traffic at Heathrow has fallen 4.8 percent in the past 12 months, partly as a result of airlines' reduced winter schedules - cut to cope with falling demand amid the economic downturn.

E.U. Leaders Near Weakened Emissions Pact

By James Kantner and Stephen Castle

In the N.Y. Times, Dec. 13, 2008

BRUSSELS — European Union leaders were on the verge of presenting a dramatically weakened plan to reduce emissions at the end of their two-day meeting on Friday.

Leaders said the plan, which offers a swathe of concessions to polluting companies and countries, would not jeopardize their overall target of reducing planet-warming emissions by 20 percent by 2020.

"The suggestion that there has been a watering down of ambition is complete nonsense," said Jose Manuel Barroso, the president of the European Commission, the European Union's executive branch.

Environmental groups, however, said it was the end of European leadership on coping with climate change. "A flagship E.U. policy now has no pilot, a mutinous crew and numerous holes in its fuselage," said Sanjeev Kumar of the environmental group WWF, formerly the World Wildlife Fund.

Parts of the plan represent a significant retreat from plans drawn up in January by the European Commission to alter Europe's pioneering Emissions Trading Scheme.

Electricity companies, which can charge customers for permits the companies receive for free, could earn windfall profits worth tens of billions of dollars over the next decade.

Mr. Barroso acknowledged that issue.

"There is the possibility of windfall profits," he said Friday, adding that was "one of the reasons the commission doesn't like the extension of free allowances."

"But sometimes, to get a consensus, we need to make concessions," Mr. Barroso said.

Under the draft plan, some of the dirtiest companies in Europe, like the utilities that operate coal-fired power stations in Eastern European countries including Poland and Hungary, will no longer have to buy all of their pollution allowances starting in 2013 — as the commission had proposed in January under a draft plan. Instead, those Eastern European utilities will buy just 30 percent of their permits starting in 2013, rising, in principle, to 100 percent in 2020, if the draft is approved.

Eastern European countries would also receive money from a so-called solidarity fund paid for by Western European industries.

Hungary had even raised the prospect during negotiations late Thursday of ditching fundamental parts of the proposal.

"It does not seem very appropriate at this stage to raise this," Mr. Barroso said curtly on Friday, referring to the Hungarian stance.

Even so — given the financial assistance offered by the European Union to the government in Budapest — the likelihood that it will seek to block the package is low.

It is not just relatively poor Eastern European countries that have pressured for a retreat.

Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany has said changes are necessary to ensure job protection at a time when recession looms large over European industry. Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy has threatened to veto any deal that was not in the interest of Italy's paper, glass, iron and ceramics sectors.

A lobby group for chemicals sector, Cefic, which includes powerhouses like BASF of Germany, led a particularly forceful campaign for the rules to be relaxed.

Along with companies that run factories in heavy industry sectors — like operators of steel plants and chemical factories in Germany — the chemicals sector has won guarantees of special treatment. Those sectors would receive free emissions permits if they can show their costs are increasing and that they are significantly exposed to international competition.

Parts of manufacturing industry that are not exposed to international competition will have to pay for 20 percent of their permits beginning in 2013. And rather than paying for 100 percent of their permits by 2020, they would pay for only 70 percent under the draft.

[Fresno Bee commentary, Sat., Dec. 13, 2008:](#)

LARRY MILLER: Big decisions on rail loom for Fresno

In reporting, editorials and letters over the past month, The Bee has become a valuable forum for airing issues about high-speed rail, Amtrak and freight rail. The Bee has also been a champion of finding matching funds to finance the construction of high-speed rail. Bravo.

But amid all this, however, it would be a mistake for the public to believe that high-speed rail is an event still over the horizon for Fresno. One critical element in the process is taking place right now and has enormous implications for how well Fresno will live with passenger and freight rail service.

This has to do with rethinking where to put the trains -- if indeed there are options that derive from the installation of high-speed rail in Fresno.

This initial recommendation of the city, county and Fresno County Council of Governments called for developing a master rail corridor for all freight and passenger trains (including high-speed rail) to be located inside the current Union Pacific freight rail corridor along Highway 99. The state's High Speed Rail Authority adopted that recommendation. The corridor was to be a completely grade-separated corridor housing all trains coming into and out of Fresno, regardless of whether they stopped in Fresno or not.

Unfortunately, the "footprint" required for the trackage, access and separation necessary to implement that plan has turned out to be nearly two to three times as wide as UP's corridor. Equally problematic, the plan presupposed that the UP would share its right of way with high-speed rail, a supposition the UP has since formally denounced -- vigorously.

Now, an ambitious feasibility study, underwritten jointly by the rail authority and the Fresno Council of Governments (COG), has been researching what options exist to route high-speed rail, Amtrak, UP and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe freight railroads into and/or around Fresno. A major concern from the Fresno side of the study is seeing if some form of freight rail consolidation can be engineered as part of the project.

No one is yet talking price tag, but the project could be on the order of \$1 billion. So with roughly 70 trains per day (a number growing rapidly) now transiting Fresno and causing long traffic delays, noise and air pollution -- among other problems -- COG views this as a rare chance to address this decades-long nightmare.

The study has come up with three general groups of options, each with various permutations, which are all compounded by a fundamental desire to put a multimodal passenger rail station downtown:

Leaving the freight rail corridors as they are and putting high-speed rail entirely into a new corridor either to the west of Fresno and/or routing it along what is now the Golden State Highway. Among other things, this has ominous implications for future rail consolidation.

Following the original preferred alignment by putting all rail service into or alongside the UP corridor or above and between Highway 99, in this case by stacking and separating the services vertically, either by means of elevated tracks or by trenching or tunneling, or both. This could be an ambitious and expensive alternative, even if UP were to cooperate.

Creating a master, grade-separated rail corridor to the west of Fresno. This could accommodate high-speed rail trains that don't stop in Fresno as well as those freight trains with cargo not destined for Fresno. But, while very few freight trains actually need to come into Fresno, both railroads have active yards in Fresno, and BNSF in particular does both crew changes and car switching in its large Calwa yard.

There are no easy solutions to these issues, but one thing is certain: The upcoming decision will impact Fresno for generations.

From 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Dec. 17, at the Fresno COG, the consulting firm, URS, will present its findings on options to a Technical Assessment Group representing Fresno's interests. Although not a public outreach meeting, the meeting is open to the public and residents of Fresno may want to follow it, perhaps with an eye to generating a larger public forum before decisions are made.

Sometimes planners, consultants and elected officials -- with good intentions -- make major decisions on the public's behalf, and only afterward does the public fully comprehend the import of such decisions.

It would be tragic if the public were not involved from the outset. This will be the largest and perhaps most important construction project Fresno has ever seen.

I urge residents to be involved, and I encourage the broadcast media to join The Bee's coverage of this hugely important decision-making process.

LARRY MILLER IS A MEMBER OF THE TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT GROUP ADVISING THE HSR-RAIL CONSOLIDATION STUDY FOR FRESNO, THE FRESNO COG RAIL COMMITTEE, THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY RAIL COMMITTEE AND THE REGIONAL BLUEPRINT ADVISORY GROUP.

[L.A. Times editorial, Monday, Dec. 15, 2008:](#)

Obama's green team

Obama's choices to lead the Energy Department and the EPA must seize the opportunity to turn around national policy.

The current Energy secretary, Samuel W. Bodman, is a former chemical-company CEO and financial-services executive. The next one is likely to be a Nobel Prize-winning physicist who runs a national laboratory dedicated to renewable energy, next-generation biofuels and other technological solutions to global warming. If there's a clearer signal of the radical course correction we can expect under President Obama, we've yet to see it.

Seldom have Washington's corridors of power been as well positioned for a change of direction as they will be next year on environmental issues. The chairs of the committees that oversee energy and environmental matters in both houses of Congress are California Democrats who would bleed green if you cut them, and the Cabinet choices Obama is expected to announce this week are to President Bush's appointees what gardeners are to gophers.

Obama's choice for Energy secretary is Steven Chu, director of the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. Though the job mostly entails overseeing nuclear waste and weapons, he also will direct government research into alternative energy and be in charge of upgrading the electricity grid to handle new power sources. He will bring scientific rigor to a position that has lacked it for the last eight years.

For head of the Environmental Protection Agency, Obama has reportedly picked Lisa Jackson, who spent 16 years at the EPA as an enforcement officer before becoming head of New Jersey's chief environmental agency. Her biggest job will be cleaning up the mess left behind by her predecessor, Stephen L. Johnson, a career EPA bureaucrat whose primary qualification was that he was willing to obey every directive handed down from his superiors, no matter how severely they undermined his agency's mission. Jackson will have her hands full trying to undo the damage done to wildlife protections and pollution standards by the most environmentally irresponsible administration since the EPA's founding in 1970. If confirmed, she should start by granting California the waiver to regulate tailpipe emissions of greenhouse gases that was denied for political reasons by Johnson.

Also said to be on tap: Carol Browner, President Clinton's EPA chief, in an as-yet-undefined position coordinating climate-change policies, and Nancy Sutley, a Los Angeles deputy mayor overseeing energy and environmental issues, as head of the White House Council on Environmental Quality. Together, they'll aim to head off the worst effects of global warming, a vast challenge that will be complicated by the nation's economic woes. Yet the political support for the needed changes is enormous -- if they can't get it done, it may never happen.

[Letters to the Fresno Bee, Monday, Dec. 15, 2008:](#)

Doing the small things

People again have started complaining about too many no-burn days. They use the excuse that they can't afford to heat their homes.

They feel they are entitled to pollute the air, in order to save a few dollars.

Fresno has mountains surrounding it, but we can't enjoy the view because of people burning wood. Don't forget the many who have breathing problems. The smell of the burning wood just takes their breath away.

I don't understand how people claim to have huge heating and cooling bills from Pacific Gas & Electric. I have a large home and pool, and my PG&E bill hasn't been over \$90 since summer. I have never had a bill over \$180.

My home is kept at reasonable temperatures in summer and winter. No one freezes in winter or sweats in summer.

I winterize by checking windows and doors for drafts. Any window with a draft gets plastic film for the winter months, the doors have foam weatherstripping in place as well. Everything that doesn't require being plugged in is left unplugged until used.

Doing these small things helps keep my PG&E bill at a reasonable cost, without having to light up my fireplace.

Beth Durbin, Fresno

'Consider the effects'

Bill Niehoff (letter Dec. 10) regarding the freedom to burn his fireplace, summarizes with the statement, "Let us live our lives in comfort!"

One of the most basic "comforts" is the ability to breathe relatively clean air. When my neighbors light up their choked-down wood stove inserts, the air around my home becomes acrid with the black smoke emanating from their chimneys.

This is not "Little House on the Prairie" with one home every two miles. We are packed in like sardines and we must all consider the effects of our actions on those around us.

Tim Barigian, Fresno

Ask TBC: Why don't they do anything about smelly dairies?

The Bakersfield Californian, Monday, Dec. 15, 2008

Q: People living in the Rosedale area are very lucky that anytime they smell the bad odor they can tell immediately that the culprit is the refinery. The problem is addressed immediately.

However, people in the southwest Bakersfield area, particularly in the vicinity of Panama Lane, are suffering also from bad odor.

Residents reported the odor several times which they believe is coming from nearby dairy farms, but there is no action at all. Is there any difference in addressing the problem in odor from refineries and in dairy farm?

— Arman Domingo

A: Dairy odors are regulated to some extent by the Kern County Environmental Health Services Department, which permits large animal facilities. Contact that department with any complaints. The main number is 862-8700.

Environmental Health Director Matt Constantine said if inspectors can identify that a dairy is the cause of off-site odors, the farm will be required to take steps to prevent it.

However, the public must understand when lodging complaints about dairy smells "that we live in a predominantly agricultural area," he said.

"I actually kind of enjoy it," he added. "It reminds me of why I don't live in Los Angeles."

As for the difference in addressing odors from farms versus a facility like a refinery, there are some things to consider, according to Brenda Turner, spokeswoman for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, which regulates emissions from farms and industrial facilities.

Refinery odors are often the result of a leak or equipment failure. The smell is abated within a short time of the problem being identified and corrected. In some cases, the air district also has the authority to fine the facility for flaring events or gas releases that exceed certain levels.

That's not necessarily the case with dairies, where smells may emanate from perfectly legal practices, such as the storage of manure in lagoons.

The air district does regulate dairies for emissions, too. But a clause in their rules exempts agriculture from being fined for odors so your best bet is to call Kern County Environmental Health Services.

[Sacramento Bee, Letter to the Editor, Saturday, December 13, 2008](#)

Economic benefits underestimated

Re "Time for candor on climate plan," (Editorial, Dec. 11): As an economist, I appreciate your editorial supporting implementation of AB 32 but disagree with your criticisms of the California Air Resources Board's economic analyses of the scoping plan measures.

The ARB's analysis relied on state-of-the-science models that simulate the state's economy. ARB's findings concur with the findings of similar studies that indicate climate policy action will have a small impact on the economy.

Any critiques of ARB's economic evaluation should take into account that even the most sophisticated modeling tools are limited in their ability to capture behaviors and innovations that lead to beneficial outcomes. The models made no comparison between alternative policies because it is not analytically possible to produce reliable results. The full benefits from cap-and-trade programs, for instance, are not represented, although empirical reviews of past programs – such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Acid Rain Program – find savings of 40 to 95 percent from using market-based measures.

ARB may have underestimated the possible benefits to California from new green jobs and clean energy technologies that will emerge due to the innovations that AB 32 will unleash.

– James Fine, Sacramento, Environmental Defense Fund

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses US is willing to fight against global warming. For more information on this or other Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at \(559\) 230-5851.](#)

Estados Unidos dispuesto a luchar contra el calentamiento

Estados Unidos está dispuesto a asumir su parte en la lucha contra el cambio climático, aseguró el jueves John Kerry, presidente de la Comisión de Relaciones Exteriores del Senado, que representa en Poznan (Polonia) al presidente estadounidense electo Barack Obama.

Terra, Thursday, December 11, 2008

"Se lo he dicho a la delegación china y se lo he dicho al secretario general (de la ONU), Estados Unidos está dispuesto a asumir su parte y lo hará bajo la dirección del presidente Obama", declaró Kerry a los periodistas durante la Conferencia de Naciones Unidas sobre Cambio Climático de Poznan.

Kerry aseguró haber transmitido al secretario general de la ONU, Ban Ki-moon, un mensaje de Obama cuyo contenido no quiso precisar.

"Estados Unidos asumirá sus responsabilidades con reducciones vinculantes" de sus emisiones de gases de efecto invernadero, afirmó. "El presidente electo ya lo ha dicho", agregó.

Sin embargo, Washington no adoptará un acuerdo que no incluya esfuerzos por parte de los países en vías de desarrollo y principalmente de las grandes economías emergentes, advirtió.

"Todos los países deben participar. China ha superado a Estados Unidos convirtiéndose en el primer emisor mundial y Japón e India le siguen", agregó.

Enviado a Poznan por Obama para ser sus ojos y sus oídos, Kerry llegó el jueves a la conferencia, donde Estados Unidos está representado por la delegación de la administración saliente de George W. Bush.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Latin America also suffers from climate change and is considered a model of action.](#)

Latinoamérica sufre cambio climático y es modelo de acción

El Banco Mundial dijo el miércoles que si bien los efectos del calentamiento global han sido hasta ahora "profundamente negativos", Latinoamérica debería ser considerada como una región de "soluciones innovadoras" para evitar una crisis climática.

Terra, Wednesday, December 10, 2008

Las temperaturas en la región se han incrementado en 1 grado centígrado (1,8 F) en el siglo pasado y el nivel del mar ha subido entre 2 y 3 milímetros anualmente desde los 80, dijo el Banco en un estudio sobre la producción de carbono y las respuestas de los gobiernos de la región.

Agrega que se han observado también cambios en los patrones de lluvia que afectan con más precipitaciones el sur de Brasil, Paraguay, Uruguay, el norte de Argentina y noroeste de Perú; y con menos lluvias el sur de Chile, sur de Argentina y sur de Perú.

"Aparte de algunos efectos positivos en las cosechas en el Cono Sur, los impactos (del cambio climático) han sido profundamente negativos, afectando algunas de las características y ecosistemas únicos de la región", según la investigación realizada por Augusto La Torre, principal economista del Banco para América Latina, y Pablo Fajnzylber y John Nash, que trabajan en la misma división regional.

Pese a ello, la región puede liderar a los países de ingreso medio en la reducción de las emisiones generadas por la deforestación, la superación del punto muerto en que se encuentra el desarrollo hidroeléctrico, el mejoramiento de la eficiencia energética y la transformación del transporte urbano, dice el estudio.

La Torre, de origen ecuatoriano, dijo que no había una contradicción entre ambos acontecimientos y mencionó la crisis financiera como ejemplo indicando que si bien no se origina en la región, en América Latina se estaban dando los menores impactos debido a las acciones de defensa adoptadas por los gobiernos regionales.

"Las empresas, los gobiernos y sociedad civil (en la región) respaldan cada vez más la idea de que la crisis es una oportunidad para crear incentivos que permitan avanzar hacia una senda de desarrollo con baja intensidad de carbono", dijo La Torre en la presentación del informe.

El estudio menciona entre los "enfoques innovadores" de la región:

_ La estrategia nacional de cambio climático de México, que adopta objetivos voluntarios de largo plazo. En el sector energético, la estrategia identifica un potencial de mitigación total de 107 millones de toneladas de gases de efecto invernadero en 2014, equivalente a una reducción del 21% si el país continuara en sus niveles actuales de emisión.

_ La independencia energética de Brasil a través de un fuerte aumento de las fuentes de energía alternativas, energía hidroeléctrica, etanol y biodiesel. Su producción de etanol extraído de la caña de azúcar es sostenible tanto en términos financieros como ambientales, y no afecta tierras de producción alimentaria.

_ La ejecución de políticas de transporte público implementadas primero en Curitiba, Brasil y en Bogotá, que actualmente están vigentes en decenas de ciudades de la región.

_ La decisión de Costa Rica de fijar un valor financiero a la preservación de los ecosistemas, a través de varias iniciativas de "pago por servicios ambientales".

_ Los sistemas de energía renovable implementadas en las zonas rurales de Argentina, que proporcionan electricidad confiable a precios que están al alcance de las comunidades e inciden positivamente en la productividad y empleo en el campo.

El Banco Mundial dijo que la región ha adoptado estas innovaciones pese a que su crecimiento económico lo estaba forzando a un incremento de las emisiones de carbono.

Indicó que de mantenerse las tendencias actuales, se proyecta que las emisiones de carbono derivadas del consumo energético en la región se incrementarán en un 33% per cápita, un indicador superior al promedio mundial del 24%, entre 2005 y 2030.

El Banco sugiere que los países, entre otras acciones, necesitan crear incentivos financieros transparentes para reducir la deforestación; movilizar flujos financieros para facilitar el despliegue de "tecnologías verdes" y crear mercados internacionales para los biocombustibles sostenibles mediante la remoción de aranceles y otros obstáculos.

[Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses 2008 is the cleanest year in more than two decades in Mexico City. They were able to reduce ozone levels.](#)

2008, el año más limpio en más de dos décadas: SMA

Hoy no Circula Sabatino logró reducir niveles de ozono, afirma Martha Delgado

Mónica Archundia

El Universal, Wednesday, December 10, 2008

El que está a punto de concluir, es el año que menos días contaminados ha tenido la ciudad en los últimos 22 años, aseguró Martha Delgado, secretaria de Medio Ambiente capitalina.

La funcionaria explicó que durante 2007 el Distrito Federal sólo tuvo 145 días con una calidad adecuada en materia de ozono, lo que significa que 60% del año los niveles de contaminación superaron los límites establecidos.

Al presentar el informe del año pasado en materia de calidad del aire en la ciudad, destacó que el ozono y las partículas suspendidas se mantienen como los contaminantes de mayor riesgo para la población.

En el ex Templo de Corpus Christi, comentó que los niveles de partículas menores a 10 micras se mantuvieron por encima de lo que establece la Norma Oficial Mexicana para la protección de la salud pública, y en el caso de partículas menores a 2.5 micras la concentración excedió el valor establecido en dicha regulación.

A lo largo de 2007 se activó en tres ocasiones la fase de precontingencia por ozono, debido a que se superaron los 170 puntos del Índice Metropolitano de la Calidad del Aire (Imeca).

Además, en la zona sur de la capital hubo presencia de lluvia ácida en áreas rurales y de reserva ecológica.

En lo que va de 2008 se han tenido 170 días dentro de la norma debido a una reducción en los niveles de ozono, que es atribuido a varios factores, entre ellos el meteorológico, y a las medidas tomadas por el gobierno de la ciudad, como el Hoy no Circula Sabatino, la restricción a la circulación a vehículos foráneos, y la reducción de 10 a ocho años para otorgar el engomado cero.

Delgado señaló que después de extender el Hoy no Circula a los sábados, se registraron menores niveles de ozono, pero estos datos aún son preeliminares y se requiere esperar los resultados de las mediciones que se realicen en temporada de calor para confirmar la tendencia.

Se ha conseguido pasar de un millón 200 mil a un millón 400 mil vehículos incorporados a la restricción vehicular, lo cual además ha motivado que entidades vecinas, como Hidalgo, Puebla, Michoacán, Morelos y Querétaro adopten medidas similares.

Delgado dijo que para el próximo año, la Comisión Ambiental Metropolitana jerarquizará las medidas que podrían implementarse en los próximos 10 años.

El GDF considera ampliar la restricción para la circulación del transporte de carga, y cambiar el trazo para la ciclovía de Reforma con una nueva licitación.