

New Environmental Protection Agency regulations unlikely to damage local businesses, regional business and government leaders say

By Jordan Guinn, News-Sentinel Staff Writer
Lodi News Sentinel, Friday, April 30, 2010

New federal regulations aimed at protecting the San Joaquin Valley's air quality gives citizens more power in reporting polluters and expands the Environmental Protection Agency's ability to enforce laws.

However, the regulations shouldn't negatively affect the way business is conducted in the region. That's the assessment of regional business and government leaders. Earlier this month, the EPA approved a revised New Source Review requiring modified or newly built structures in San Joaquin Valley to conform to federal emissions requirements and permitting controls.

The move is necessary because San Joaquin Valley routinely has some of the worst air quality in the nation, said Deborah Jordan, director of the Air Division for the EPA's Pacific Southwest region in a statement. Having new or modified buildings subject to the most stringent requirements will help make communities healthier, she said.

The EPA estimated 350 structures in the county emitting more than 10 tons per year of ozone-producing pollutants, rather than the current threshold of 25 tons per year would be subject to the enhanced federal regulation. But the new requirements are much ado about nothing, in the opinion of Dave Warner, director of permit services for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

Pollution standards in California are traditionally the strictest in the nation, he said, and the state already has laws in place for permit requirements.

"From the EPA's perspective, this gives them federal enforceability," he said.

While he agreed that the New Source Review doesn't change local rules, Kerry Drake, associate director of Air Division region 9 for the EPA, said it enables the federal government to serve as a backstop when local or state agencies aren't able to crack down on polluters.

"We are able to come in to help as needed," Drake said.

The New Source Review also enables regular people to take matters into their own hands, he said.

"Citizens can sue if a facility isn't in compliance," he said. "It gives them another mechanism." The EPA's New Source Review shouldn't have a negative affect on local businesses, Warner said.

"I don't see how it will have an impact," he said. "There is no difference in how permits are constructed."

A local business advocate agrees with Warner.

"We're in the Central Valley and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has stricter guidelines to begin with," said Fran Aguilera, economic development director for the San Joaquin County Enterprise Zone.

Aguilera said he hasn't fielded any calls from business owners complaining about the new standards in the two weeks since it was enacted.

Like Warner, Aguilera said the New Source Review is a way for the EPA to have the ability to enforce federal regulations. Most of the pollution in the Central Valley comes from automobiles, Aguilera said, which are regulated by the federal government.

The air pollution control district can only go after static sources of pollution, such as factories, he said, while the EPA has control over what emissions vehicles can produce. The New Source Review offers the EPA the opportunity to clamp down on polluters, but won't get the opportunity since the local pollution guidelines are more stringent, he said. "We are already held to a higher standard," he said.

Drake agreed in theory, but said the EPA sets the tone for what is acceptable when it comes to pollution.

"I wouldn't say they (San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District) are more stringent," he said. "It's because of us that they have such high standards."

Valley air among nation's worst

By Seth Nidever

Hanford Sentinel, Friday, April 30, 2010

Despite cleanup efforts, San Joaquin Valley air - including the stuff in Kings County - remains among the most polluted in the nation, according to a study released Wednesday by the American Lung Association.

In three pollution categories - ozone, short-term particle pollution and year-round particle pollution, Hanford ranked in the top 10 cities for worst air quality. Fresno, Bakersfield and Visalia were also in the top 10 and were consistently ranked higher than Hanford.

Air pollution worsens respiratory conditions like asthma, bronchitis and emphysema and exacerbates heart problems. The study showed improvement in Hanford's air quality in most categories over the last decade, but also indicated that the San Joaquin Valley is still well above U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards for smog and small particle pollution, much of it attributed to industrial and vehicle exhaust.

Over the past several years, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has been tightening regulations in an effort to meet the standard. Progress has been made in both areas, but according to the report, tighter rules on power plants and vehicle emissions will be necessary if residents want to achieve clearer skies.

More regulations are being proposed. California is considering tougher restrictions on emissions from diesel trucks, and the EPA is thinking about strengthening ozone standards.

"Dirty power plants and dirty diesel vehicles, heavy equipment and ocean-going vessels currently in use are some of the biggest polluters that threaten the lives and health of our families. The American Lung Association supports tighter controls on these big polluters to improve air quality," said Charles Connor, American Lung Association president and CEO.

Bad air

California cities with worst air
Ranked nationally, 2006-2008

Ozone pollution

1. Los Angeles
2. Bakersfield
3. Visalia
4. Fresno
5. Sacramento
6. Hanford

Year-round particle pollution

2. Bakersfield
3. Los Angeles
4. Visalia
6. Fresno
8. Hanford

Short-term (24-hour) particle pollution

1. Bakersfield
2. Fresno
4. Los Angeles
6. Sacramento
8. Visalia
10. Hanford

Recommendations

- Drive less.
- Don't burn wood or trash.

- Use less electricity.

Source: American Lung Association report, "State of the Air 2010"

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses Los Angeles continues being the city with the worst air in the nation. The second region with the poorest air quality was Bakersfield. For more information on this Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at (559) 230-5851.

Los Ángeles permanecen como la ciudad con el peor aire en el país

Manuel Ocaño, Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Thursday, April 29, 2010

La zona metropolitana de Los Ángeles continúa siendo la que tiene el aire más deteriorado en el país, de acuerdo con un nuevo reporte nacional de la Asociación Americana del Pulmón.

Los Ángeles, junto con Long Beach, San Bernardino y Riverside son la zona con aire más contaminado, según el reporte que impone calificación de "F", o reprobatoria para la región. La calificación se basó en el número de días por año que Los Ángeles y áreas vecinales tuvieron el aire con niveles dañinos para la salud. La siguiente región con calidad del aire preocupante fue Bakersfield, California.