

County air quality one of the worst in nation

By Sabra Stafford

Turlock Journal, Wednesday, May 12, 2010

The latest study released by the American Lung Association shows Stanislaus County still has great strides to make in its quest for clean air.

The association's 2010 State of the Air Report issued a failing grade to Stanislaus County when it comes to healthy air. The county was ranked the 10th worst county in the nation for air quality.

The news was just as grim, if not worse, for other California cities and counties. The report found that Californians breathe some of the worst air in the nation.

Over 91 percent of Californians — more than 33 million — live in counties with failing air quality grades and are subject to persistent and pervasive ozone smog and harmful particle pollution, particularly in areas such as Bakersfield, Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Diego and the San Joaquin Valley.

Californians also breathe unhealthy air more than 100 days annually, according to the American Lung Association.

"California has led the nation in fighting pollution yet we still face enormous challenges to improve our air quality," Jane Warner, president and chief executive officer of the American Lung Association in California. "More Californians die each year from air pollution than die in car accidents. We can and must do more to protect the health of the people of this great state," Warner continued.

Air pollution takes a considerable toll on California, not only in lives but in major health care costs. Annually, the state's dirty air causes 19,000 premature deaths, 9,400 hospitalizations and more than 300,000 respiratory illnesses including asthma and acute bronchitis. Moreover, a recent study released by the RAND Corporation found that the state's dirty air costs \$193 million in hospital and emergency room visits between 2005 and 2007.

The State of the Air report analyzed ozone and fine particle matter in more than 600 counties across the nation between 2006 to 2008.

The San Joaquin Valley generally scores dismally when it comes to air quality in part because of its topography. The mountain ranges that border the Valley trap pollution in the air basin.

The report's ranking of the 25 cities most polluted by short-term particle pollutions included seven San Joaquin Valley cities in the top 15, with Modesto at the ninth spot and Merced at the 11th.

Despite the poor rankings, California has some of the strictest regulatory and legislative policies regarding air quality.

"The American Lung Association in California will continue to advocate for strong regulations and increased investment in programs that reduce harmful pollution," Warner said. "We are urging the California Air Resources Board to maintain the state's critical diesel regulations and bring zero emission and other advanced clean cars to California. We also call on Californians to reject the Texas oil companies' attempt to undo California's clean air and clean energy laws."

"Individuals can also improve air quality in their communities," Warner said. "We ask all Californians to make an effort to reduce driving and wood burning, replace light bulbs with energy efficient fluorescent bulbs, recycle cans, bottles and newspapers and to use a gas or electric grill for outdoor grilling."

Note: The following clip in Spanish discusses three lawsuits against EPA were filed because they failed to clean the air in the San Joaquin Valley. For more information on this Spanish clips, contact Claudia Encinas at (559) 230-5851.

Presentan tres demandas contra EPA por fallar en limpiar el aire del Valle de San Joaquín

Manuel Ocaño, Noticiero Latino

Radio Bilingüe, Tuesday, May 11, 2010

Por lo menos cuatro organizaciones ambientalistas y de salud presentaron tres demandas consecutivas contra las autoridades ambientales en el país y anunciaron que planean presentar todavía otras demandas. Los grupos, Sierra Club, Justicia Ambiental, los Defensores de la Salud y Aire Saludable presentaron las demandas en San Francisco, California, a nombre de organizaciones y residentes del Valle de San Joaquín que se quejan de que la Agencia federal de Protección Ambiental (EPA) no ha cumplido con proteger el medio ambiente.

Las demandas coinciden en que el Valle es una de las zonas del país con peores concentraciones de ozono, y las autoridades no actúan de acuerdo con ese riesgo. Las demandas se interpusieron a nombre del Comité de Residentes Organizados por un Ambiente Sano, el Comité para un Mejor Aire, y el Centro de Raza, Pobreza y Medio Ambiente.