

Valley set for roller-coaster weather ride

By Eddie Jiminez, staff writer

The Fresno Bee, Wednesday, August 25, 2010

Go figure this wacky Valley weather.

A mini-heat wave with a near-record high forecast of 108 for Fresno today will quickly give way to highs in the low 80s by Sunday.

In fact, Sunday's expected high of 81 would be a 27-degree drop within a five-day stretch.

The brief span of hot weather has led to the opening of cooling centers throughout the Valley and the cancellation of outdoor athletic team practices in Fresno Unified School District.

The heat wave that moved into the Valley from the south will keep temperatures above 100 through Thursday.

It will be followed by a low-pressure system that has been hanging over the Gulf of Alaska and will cause the sudden temperature dip, said Jeff Barlow, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Hanford.

"We have two extremes battling it out," Barlow said.

Such temperatures swings are not common in the Valley but do happen now and again, he said.

For example, he said, on May 15 Fresno's high hit 90 degrees, plummeted to 65 two days later and then jumped back up to 84 on May 19, Barlow said.

Valley temperatures should rise again after Sunday's highs in the low 80s, though not as dramatically as May's roller coaster. By Monday, highs will return to the mid-90s, which are normal for this time of the year, Barlow said.

Tuesday's high in Fresno was 104. Today's forecast high of 108 would fall short of the record for Aug. 25 of 110 that was recorded in 1931, Barlow said.

Air quality in Fresno and Tulare counties Tuesday was unhealthy, according to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. In Kings and Madera counties, the air was unhealthy for sensitive groups.

[Unhealthy air quality is expected today in Fresno, Tulare and Kings counties.](#)

In addition to canceling outdoor athletic practices between 2 and 7 p.m. Tuesday, Fresno Unified postponed a water polo scrimmage between Sunnyside High School and Yosemite High School, said Susan Bedi, district spokeswoman.

Other school districts said athletic practices were not canceled, but practices were modified to ensure frequent breaks and plenty of water for athletes.

Wildfire threatening structures along Lebec Oaks Road

By Jason Kotowski, Californian staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Wednesday, August 25, 2010

LEBEC — A wildfire raced up mountains in the Lebec area Tuesday afternoon, spurring the evacuation of hundreds of residences and leading to the deployment of firefighters from several agencies who had slowed the blaze's progress by nightfall.

The Post Fire had grown to about 1,300 acres as of Tuesday evening, said Kern County Battalion Chief Mark Geary, the incident commander. He said firefighters would be working overnight to protect Frazier Park, and no evacuations in that area were planned.

No structures had burned and no injuries had been reported, Geary said

Some residents experienced a mix of emotions throughout the day, ranging from nervousness early on when it wasn't clear where the fire was headed, to immense relief as they heard either from firefighters or friends that no homes had been damaged.

"We've never seen anything like this," said Harry Coates, who moved to Lebec with his wife about five years ago and was waiting for Lebec Road to reopen so they could return home.

Late Tuesday, all evacuation orders were lifted.

An arson unit was investigating, Fire Chief Nick Dunn said, but no cause had been determined. Patches of scorched land were visible from Interstate 5, and massive clouds of smoke billowing off the mountains could be seen from miles away.

California Highway Patrol officers had set up roadblocks along Lebec Road to keep motorists from the area. There was no estimate as to when residents would be allowed to return to their homes.

More than 500 personnel were on scene from the Kern County Fire Department, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, Los Angeles County Fire Department, Kern County Animal Control and Kern County Sheriff's Department.

Crews were using helicopters and air tankers to fight the flames. The rumble of helicopters was heard every few minutes as they passed back and forth from Castaic Lake, where they loaded up with water, to the fire.

Evacuees were being directed to Frazier Mountain High School, 700 Falcon Way in Lebec. The Kern Chapter of the American Red Cross sent supplies and volunteers there to help evacuees. Dawn LaChance was at home when the fire broke out. She left and came back with her 8-year-old son, Chandler, but she couldn't return to her home.

She said she became "really emotional" and cried when she saw the firefighters on the ridge, working hard to beat back the flames. LaChance said she was impressed by how quickly the firefighters responded to the area.

Over at the Lebec post office, Lebec resident Lorelei Archer handed out bottles of water to others. She had already loaded up her car with her medicine, pictures and keepsakes in case she had to leave.

"When you live up here, you love it so much," said Archer, who has a mobile home.

Archer said she had been concerned because the area had seen a lot of rain earlier in the year, and as a result the brush was especially high.

Dave and Linda Wilke were waiting with a few dozen other residents at the north end of the roadblock on Lebec Road. They said Animal Control had gone to their home and rescued their four dogs.

"I feel a lot better now," Linda Wilke said.

Harry and Christina Coates were in Santa Clarita when they first heard about the blaze near their home. They drove back and were able to get their dogs and cats into a truck. Late Tuesday afternoon, they were walking the dogs and waiting by the roadblock.

"I'm kind of stressed," Christina Coates said.

Fuel cell plant to be installed at French Camp ranch

Business Journal Tuesday, August 24, 2010

A new fuel cell power plant utilizing poultry waste for energy will be installed at a ranch in San Joaquin County through an agreement announced recently between FuelCell Energy, Inc. and G3 Power Systems, Inc.

The power plant, to be installed at Olivera Egg Ranch, LLC in French Camp, will produce renewable electricity using methane gas from poultry waste via an anaerobic digester. The plant

will meet nearly all of the power needs at Olivera Ranch, a third-generation family farm that produces around 14 million cartons of eggs per year.

In addition, the 1.4 megawatt power plant, which is expected to be operational by mid-2011, will reduce greenhouse gas emissions coming from the ranch.

According to the terms of the sale, FuelCell Energy, a manufacturer of renewable power plants, will service the power plant under a five-year service agreement.

Novato, Calif.-based G3, which designs fuel cell installations, has completed 14 energy projects including fuel cells, solar and biomass applications. In March, FuelCell Energy entered into an agreement with G3 to provide non-exclusive distribution rights for its fuel cell power plants.