

Air district extends alert

Bakersfield Californian, Saturday, Aug. 27, 2011

The valley made it through the first week of air alerts without exceeding the EPA limit, though measurements in several areas edged dangerously close. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has extended the air alert through Monday.

Exceeding that ozone standard -- 125 parts per billion for a one-hour period -- could trigger a \$29 million federal monetary penalty.

"The response to this Air Alert has been overwhelmingly positive and proactive," according to Seyed Sadredin, the air district's executive director and air pollution control officer. "The efforts of the valley's population is what will make the difference in avoiding this critical ozone threshold."

Preliminary data show the highest ozone levels this week occurred in areas such as Edison (116 ppb), Arvin (110 ppb) and Clovis (111 ppb).

Valley ozone levels close to violation range

By Paula Lloyd

The Fresno Bee, Thursday, Aug. 25, 2011

With high temperatures hovering around the 100-degree mark and air quality at unhealthy levels, Valley ozone readings are inching dangerously close to a violation of federal standards.

A reading over 125 parts per billion of ozone would trigger a violation.

"We don't want to pass 125," said Jaime Holt, spokeswoman for the San Joaquin Air Pollution Control District. "We're still at risk, but we're holding steady."

A one-hour ozone reading of 116 was recorded in Kern County on Wednesday, but the level dropped to 113 on Thursday.

The San Joaquin Valley hasn't had any one-hour ozone violations this year. To keep it that way, the district is urging Valley residents to help reduce emissions by driving less, not letting vehicles idle, taking lunch to work and not using charcoal barbecues.

"We're not out of the woods yet," Holt said.

Partly cloudy conditions forecast for tonight could improve air quality, but only slightly, Holt said. An air alert scheduled to end Sunday has been extended to Monday.

Air quality on Friday is forecast to be unhealthy for sensitive groups in Fresno, Tulare and Kern counties but moderate in Madera and Kings counties, the air district said.

The high temperature for Fresno Friday is forecast at 98 degrees, according to the National Weather Service. Highs could top 100 over the weekend, returning to the 90s by Monday.

San Joaquin Air Alert in effect through Monday

Modesto Bee, Saturday, Aug. 27, 2011

The region's first Air Alert warning about elevated ozone levels has been extended through Monday, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District said.

The alerts cover Stanislaus, Merced, San Joaquin, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and portions of Kern counties.

Residents are encouraged to limit driving and idling in their vehicles.

About 80 percent of the valley's ozone-forming emissions are produced by vehicle use.

Businesses and public agencies can reduce emissions by shifting activities such as lawn care to early morning or late evening; offering flexible work schedules; and encouraging car pools and van pools for workers.

For more, go to www.valleyair.org.

Valley's Air Alert extended one day to Aug. 29 because of ozone levels

Sun-Star Staff

Merced Sun-Star, Saturday, Aug. 27, 2011

The Valley's first Air Alert neared the end of the week Friday with ozone levels elevated but still under the federal standard, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District said, and has been extended one day to be in effect through Monday, Aug. 29.

Valley residents and businesses continued their concerted effort to ward off a one-hour ozone exceedance that would trigger a federal monetary penalty, the agency said in a news release.

The Valley's first Air Alert was declared Tuesday, Aug. 23. Air Alerts are declared Valley-wide and include the counties of San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and portions of Kern.

Air Alerts are called when conditions may lead to ozone (smog) formation that results in exceeding health-based ozone standards of 125 parts per billion (ppb) and triggering substantial federal monetary penalties.

About 80 percent of the Valley's ozone-forming emissions are produced by vehicle use. Residents can reduce smog-forming emissions by refraining from idling when dropping off or picking up students, carpooling or vanpooling, and refraining from using drive-through services.

Businesses and municipalities can reduce emissions by shifting operations to early morning or late evening, as in lawn care; offering flexible work schedules, and encouraging carools and vanpools for employees. Businesses can also enroll at no cost in the Healthy Air Living Partner program.

For more information about Air Alerts, visit http://www.valleyair.org/AirAlert/AirAlert_Landing.htm.

Air District extends alert; calls for continued support

By Sabra Stafford

Turlock Journal, Friday, Aug. 26, 2011

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is reminding citizens to stay vigilant in their efforts to reduce ozone emissions, as the district tries to stave off another round of fines from the Environmental Protection Agency.

"Temperatures remain high and there is very little atmospheric dispersion, which are ideal conditions for ozone formation," said Stephen Shaw, the Air District's supervising air quality analyst. "The importance of everyone in the Valley reducing their emissions can't be overstated."

The Central Valley's first Air Alert was declared Tuesday and is in effect through Monday for the entire Central Valley.

Air Alerts are called when conditions may lead to smog formation that results in exceeding health-based ozone standards of 125 parts per billion and in the process, triggering substantial monetary penalties.

In 2010, the EPA fined the Central Valley \$29 million for violating federal air-quality standards. Penalty fees can be assessed on businesses that are not using clean-air technology and practices. Additionally, Central Valley residents will have a \$12 fee added to their vehicle registration beginning in October to pay a portion of the fine.

On Monday, the three highest ozone readings in the air basin were 97 ppb at Ash Mountain (Tulare County); 91 ppb in Parlier (Fresno County); and 90 ppb in Arvin (Kern County).

On Tuesday, the three highest readings were 108 ppb in Parlier, 107 ppb in central Fresno and 103 ppb in Edison (Kern County). Edison also had the highest levels for Wednesday and Thursday.

"The response to this Air Alert has been overwhelmingly positive and proactive," said Seyed Sadredin, the Air District's executive director and air pollution control officer. "The efforts of the Valley's population is what will make the difference in avoiding this critical ozone threshold."

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UPS to buy 100 electric trucks

By Reed Fujii

Stockton Record, Saturday, Aug. 27, 2011

United Parcel Service is buying 100 electric-powered delivery vans from Electric Vehicles International, a deal that could be worth \$17.8 million to the Stockton-based truck assembler and "create dozens of new clean-tech jobs."

Those trucks are to be used in various regions of California, including Stockton and the Central Valley, and Southern California.

UPS said the vehicles will replace older-generation diesel trucks and be the largest single deployment of zero-emission delivery vehicles in the state. The diesel vans they replace would have burned an estimated 126,000 gallons of fuel a year.

Stockton Mayor Ann Johnston welcomed the news.

"I'm very pleased that there's a signed purchase order from UPS," she said Friday. "It's just exciting that something is going into production that is going to mean jobs in our community."

While the companies did not disclose a final price for the vehicles, according to government documents, they will cost about \$178,000 apiece, a price approaching nearly three times that of conventional delivery vans.

Volume production is the way to close that price gap, said Michael Ammann, president and chief executive of the San Joaquin Partnership.

"It's really an issue of scale," he said. "Any of the electric vehicles, whether they're for consumers or (commercial) trucks, we've always got to look at fleets to make an impact."

Ammann said the partnership hopes to encourage other companies in the region that would produce other types of vehicles, whether electric, hybrid or electric conversions, less dependent on fossil fuels.

"This type of scaling up ... is critical to our future there," he said.

The [San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control](#) District detailed the costs of the EVI trucks in June when approving a \$1.4 million grant for the project.

Its documents said UPS will spend \$100,000 per truck, about \$35,000 more than a comparable diesel-powered van. The state of California will provide \$50,000 per vehicle through three separate incentive programs, and air district funds, both in the Valley and in Southern California, amounted to \$28,000 apiece.

"The cost of these is still prohibitive," said Mike Britt, UPS director of vehicle engineering talking about electric trucks in general with the San Francisco Chronicle.

But he, too, expects prices to come down as more vehicles are produced.

"We understand the chicken-and-egg theory, and we're trying to kick-start things here with EVI," Britt told the Chronicle.

UPS and EVI have worked for more than two years on developing the electric delivery vans, including a successful 90-day test of a prototype truck last fall.

Britt said the purchase would help advance electric vehicle technology.

"EVI's vehicle met our requirements in the test phase. Now we will operate these vehicles in the real world and help establish the future viability of this technology," he said in a news release.

UPS currently operates 28 all-electric vehicles in New York City and in Europe.

Summing up August — by the numbers E-Mail

In the Modesto Bee, Saturday, Aug. 27, 2011

Numbers, numbers, numbers ... if you want some, we've got some on this final Saturday of the month. So, without further ado, we bid adieu to August with a month's worth of numerals plucked from the news.

The percentage of Californians who paid use tax on out-of-state online purchases when they filed their 2009 state income tax returns. Wow, 42 percent of us, you say? No, not 42 percent, or even 4.2 percent, but 0.42 percent, as in less than one half of 1 percent, according to the state Board of Equalization and the Franchise Tax Board. The fact that so few Californians self-report and pay the required sales tax to the state resulted in the Legislature passing a new online tax law — the one that Amazon and other major online retailers are fighting hard to have reversed.

New Policy in California

Aug 2011: Drivers with no DUIs may qualify for \$9 a week car insurance Fresno: "Mom is 53, Looks 32 ..."

Her shocking \$4 wrinkle therapy angers Botox Doctors. We reveal how...Mom Turns \$47 Into \$6,795

Fresno mom spills secret on how she makes \$6795/mo from home computer. Ads by Yabuka1: Where dairy ranks on the list of Stanislaus County agricultural industries. And where milk ranks among California farm products for gross income. And where California ranks among states for milk production. With all those top rankings — and the \$3.92 billion in gross income valley dairy

farmers in 2009— why is the industry struggling? You can read our recent special report at <http://is.gd/4JkzV2>.

The average price in dollars and cents for a gallon of regular gas in Modesto as of Friday, according to The Bee's price tracker. The price at the pump currently ranges from \$3.31 to \$3.76. For a look at who's got the best prices in your community, go to www.modbee.com/gas.

The number of ways you can take back your weekend — from not letting chores build up during the week to turning off your cell phone. That's the focus of tomorrow's Parade magazine, which aims to help us "say goodbye to chaos — and chill for a change." Check out Sunday's Bee.

The fee, in dollars, that is being added to valley vehicle registrations to pay a \$29 million annual penalty for our region exceeding air pollution standards. We know, it's not fair that much of our air pollution is due to the Bay Area and pass-through traffic. Nonetheless, as we clean up our air, the DMV fee will drop. Which means there's an incentive for all of us to reduce pollution — especially during dirty air days such as we're currently experiencing. For ways to do that, check out a column by Seyed Sadredin, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution District's executive director, at <http://is.gd/1MifMV>.

Stanislaus County's unemployment rate for July. That was exactly what it was in July of last year — signaling again that the valley has yet to see any real signs of economic recovery. And most experts don't see improvement any time soon. In fact, in Merced County, things are about to get a little worse; as the state was about to release Merced's 18.7 percent jobless rate, the Werner Ladder Co. announced plans to close its local plant, putting 140 people out of work.

The latest dropout rates for Stanislaus County elementary and high school districts, as compiled by the state Department of Education. Schools in the Newman-Crows Landing district had the highest rate at 23.4 percent, while Oakdale boasted the lowest at 5.8 percent; Modesto City Schools' rate was 20.7. Overall, 18.7 percent of California public school students dropped out before finishing high school in 2010.

The minutes you had to wait to be seen in the Doctors Medical Center emergency room at 11 a.m. one day this week; by 5:30 p.m. the same day, the wait had grown to 1 hour and 20 minutes. How do we know? Simple: We went to www.dmc-modesto.com and checked out the ER Wait Clock. If you have a medical issue that isn't life threatening but you need to go to the ER, it's a great way to minimize your wait. The clock, by the way, is updated every five minutes. And if that's not enough, for a \$9.99 registration fee, you can reserve a time; if you aren't seen within 15 minutes, DMC will refund your fee.

The number of folks who turned out for a pair of Kaiser-Permanente health fairs in Modesto and Stockton last weekend. The Neighbors in Health events offered a range of services at no cost, from blood pressure, cholesterol and diabetes screenings to eye exams to mammograms and immunizations.

The median sales price for a home in Stanislaus County in July. That was down \$2,136 from June and \$10,000 from July 2010, according to DataQuick which compiles monthly home sales and other figures. Statewide, the median home sales price in July was \$252,000 — \$1,000 less than June and \$16,000 less than July 2010.

The number of registered voters in Stanislaus County, as of the election last fall. With another vote coming up Nov. 8, citizens have until Oct. 24 to register to vote. For more election information — from how to register, where you vote, how to vote by mail and more — contact your county clerk's office; in Stanislaus County, call (209) 525-5200 or go to www.stanvote.com.

The sales price, in greenbacks, of the downtown Modesto post office at 12th and I streets. The buyer, whose identity is being kept under wraps, will be limited in what can be done with the 78-

year-old building. Because the building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places — because of its Depression-era artwork, architecture and other features — there are restrictions on modifying or modernizing it.

Study will look at expanding Kern commuter rail service

By John Cox, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Friday, Aug. 26, 2011

The state's high-speed rail project has local transportation planners pondering opportunities for adding commuter train service to places like Shafter, Rosamond and the Delano area.

The idea is that a new bullet train option would probably take away passengers from Amtrak's San Joaquin line. Amtrak could make up for that by serving Bakersfield area residents tired of driving to work.

As it stands, the San Joaquin service's only Kern County Amtrak stop outside Bakersfield is in Wasco. It might be feasible to add new stops in areas where lots of people work, said Rob Ball, director of planning at the Kern Council of Governments.

Tighter air quality regulations provide the impetus to expand commuter rail service, Ball said.

"We need to look at more energy efficient ways of getting around and getting to work," he said.

This week Kern COG began soliciting proposals for a feasibility study of commuter rail opportunities along Amtrak's Bakersfield to Fresno corridor. Kern COG expects to spend \$90,000 on the study, which would need to be done within about six months.

Kern COG is also interested in opportunities for extending Southern California's Metrolink service to Rosamond. That could be useful, Ball said, because it would serve a portion of the roughly 20,000 people working at nearby Edwards Air Force Base.

Among the biggest beneficiaries of new commuter rail service in the county would be the thousands of people who work at Kern's various correctional facilities. Ball specifically mentioned prisons west of Delano and a facility in the Shafter area.

[Visalia Times-Delta and Tulare Advance-Register, Editorial, Monday, Aug. 29, 2011:](#)

Air district takes positive steps

Thumbs up to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District for being progressive in addressing improvements in air quality.

The air district last week announced a new system for letting people know when ozone concentrations in the San Joaquin Valley exceed healthful levels, called Air Alert. The district announced the first Air Alert last week.

Critics might assert that those notices don't do much. But the fact is that notifying the public about unhealthy air in programs such as Spare the Air, No Burn days and other critical times for air quality has created a culture that is having results.

The Valley has not solved its air quality problems, but it has made progress. Some of the credit can go to the programs promoted by the air district.

The public and local businesses need to take these warnings seriously. It might not seem to be a direct threat to health and the environment to have a day when the ozone reached an elevated level for one hour or more (the definition by the Environmental Protection Agency), but it matters. And it matters in dollars and cents. The air district, which includes the eight counties in the southern San Joaquin Valley, are subject to a \$28 million fine by the federal government for excessive ozone pollution. The district's program is one strategy to reduce the ozone and avoid paying that fine.

So when Air Alerts are called, consider cutting back on driving, especially. But also consider other ways to limit contributing to particulate matter in the Valley, such as cutting use of other small engines or reducing combustible actions such as barbecues.

The air is getting better, but not all by itself. We need to help by doing our part. The air district is helping to keep us on track.

[Modesto Bee Guest Commentary, Friday, Aug. 25, 2011](#)

SEYED SADREDIN: How you can help \$29M air penalty blow away

By Seyed Sadredin

As many of you know, despite significant improvements in our air quality, under an arcane provision of federal law, valley residents and businesses are subject to a penalty of approximately \$29 million per year for failing to meet the federal one-hour standard for ozone.

In 1996, the valley air basin racked up 56 days where ozone levels exceeded federal health-based standards for one-hour ozone readings. Last year, there were only seven such days. If anything, valley residents and businesses deserve a reward and not a penalty.

We were able to craft a creative approach that will prevent the federal government from taking this money and placing it in the federal treasury.

Under the plan adopted by the air district, the penalty mandate will be satisfied by residents paying \$12 per year in DMV fees and businesses without best available control technology paying a fee based on their emissions. Every penny collected then will be reinvested in the valley, in projects that reduce air pollution and help our fragile economy. Nonetheless, we have to do everything we can to make this penalty go away.

We are pursuing legislation in Congress (House Resolution 1582 by Rep. Kevin McCarthy, R-Bakersfield) to repeal the penalty. But given the current political stalemate in Washington, don't hold your breath.

To make this unfair penalty go away, we're asking the public, businesses and municipalities to consider a range of voluntary actions that can reduce air pollution on a few days each year when we're at risk of going over the federal standard in question. If we're successful, not only we will experience health benefits from reduced air pollution, but we can also see a benefit in our pocketbooks by eliminating this penalty.

This is why the air district has developed a new Air Alert notification system. Recent trends indicate that these violations occur at the start of the school season with increased traffic combined with high temperatures and stagnant conditions. Air Alert episodes, which can last anywhere from a couple of days to a week, will be declared when meteorological conditions and emission trends indicate the likelihood of a violation if no adjustments are made. There are steps that valley residents and businesses can take to avert an exceedance during an Air Alert. All of this is voluntary but highly encouraged.

Residents can:

- Refrain from idling when dropping off or picking up students
- Carpool, vanpool or use alternate transportation
- Refrain from using drive-through services

Businesses and municipalities can:

- Shift operations to early morning or late evening (lawn care)
- Offer flexible work schedules
- Promote carpools and vanpools for employees
- Implement telecommuting
- Become a Healthy Air Living Partner

Valley residents and businesses can sign up to receive Air Alerts through the Air District's automated e-mail list at www.valleyair.org. Air Alerts will also be posted on the District's Web sites (<http://valleyair.org> and www.healthyairliving.com); social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter; available toll-free at (800) 766-4463; and will be widely broadcast on valley TV and radio stations.

The new Air Alert system is a critical tool to inform and educate valley residents of the immediate consequences of emission-creating activities, and to urge alternatives that can help us avoid painful economic penalties and poor health outcomes that will affect everyone in the air basin.

For more information about air alerts and the valley air district, please contact our regional office in Modesto: (209) 557-6400.

Sadredin is executive director and air pollution control officer of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District.

[Bakersfield Californian, Friday, Aug. 26, 2011:](#)

A bill to help put ag waste to work as energy

Through the state's Net Energy Metering program, homeowners and businesses that install small-scale solar and wind facilities can deduct the power generated by their system from the power provided by utility companies. In other words, when rooftop solar panels make power during the day, a homeowner's electricity meter runs backward and the electricity produced is deducted from the electricity used.

However, up until now net metering only applied to wind and solar power generation. A bill that has passed the state Senate and awaits approval by the Assembly would change this, and allow all state-recognized forms of renewable energy -- including biomass -- to be included in the net metering program.

SB 489 will be especially helpful to farmers who want to convert agricultural waste to energy to supplement the power they must use to run the farm. Under current rules, farmers must go through a costly and lengthy application process to get such systems OK'd.

Until recent air regulations took effect, many farmers in the Central Valley disposed of ag waste through open burning, which contributed to the region's poor air quality. That means biomass energy production, which can involve methods such as nut-hull burning, will be highly regulated. But it makes sense to pursue new, innovative ways to transform waste.

Utility companies have long opposed net metering, so it's no surprise they oppose SB 489. But they are virtually alone. A long list of agricultural and solid waste industries, as well as environmental groups, are behind the bill. While SB 489 alone will only incrementally address the state's energy challenges, the bill represents a step toward cleaner energy and minimal-waste methods of generating power.