

## **Check before you burn for holiday season**

Hanford Sentinel, Thurs., Dec. 27, 2012

HANFORD — The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is urging local residents to check before they burn wood in the fireplace for the rest of the holiday season.

On a no-burn day, burning of fire logs, wood or solid pellets is prohibited. Homes are exempted if they don't have natural gas or if wood burning is the only heating source.

Gas-burning stoves are always allowed and are encouraged.

Fine particulate matter, of which fireplace burning is a main source, causes bronchial infections, contributes to lung disease and aggravates respiratory conditions like asthma.

Wood-burning forecasts are available at 4:30 p.m. by:

Calling 1-800-766-4463

Visiting [www.valleyair.org/aqinfo/WoodBurnPage.htm](http://www.valleyair.org/aqinfo/WoodBurnPage.htm)

Signing up for automatic emails at [www.valleyair.org/lists/list.htm](http://www.valleyair.org/lists/list.htm)

Downloading the free "valley air" app at the iPhone App Store or iTunes

## **Miller to receive KernCOG leadership award**

**Councilman selected for prestigious Darrell Hildebrand Regional Award of Merit**

Taft Midway Driller, Fri., Dec. 21, 2012

KernCOG is going to honor another Taftian. Taft City Councilman Randy Miller, who just completed a term as Mayor, was notified this week that he will receive the Darrell Hildebrand Regional Award of Merit for Distinguished Leadership by an Elected Official.

Miller was nominated by fellow Councilman Paul Linder. In his letter recommending Miller, Linder cited Millers' years of public service. Miller, a Vietnam Veteran who received the Purple Heart and other commendations for his service in the United States Navy.

Miller is in his third four-year term on the city council. He has served on the Oildorado Board for 33 years, been a member of Kiwanis for 30 years, served on the West Side Health Care Board, Taft Planning Commission, the board of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. He has also served as director of the Taft District Chamber of Commerce,

In his letter of nomination, Linder wrote about Miller's dedication to Taft: "Randy does not know how to say no to any person or organization who asks for help. He is a cheerleader for the local community and a proud family man, veteran, and public servant never asking anything in return but continuing to give back to his community and country while encouraging all citizens to 'Not just reside in Taft, but to live here.' "

Miller will receive his award on March 7 at the annual Regionals Awards Ceremony at the Petroleum Club in Bakersfield.

## **Computerized smog tests just down the road in 2013**

**Station owners worry about cost to upgrade**

By Alex Breitler, staff writer

Stockton Record, Thurs., Dec. 27, 2012

The days of the old tailpipe smog check are numbered.

Starting next week, state officials will roll out a new program they say should result in faster and cheaper tests that will help reduce auto emissions in California.

First, cars targeted as likely gross polluters will be routed to specially certified smog check stations that will be subject to stricter oversight by the state.

Then, sometime next year, cars model year 2000 or newer will no longer have their tailpipe emissions tested on treadmill-like machines known as dynamometers. Instead, technicians will plug into the vehicles' on-board computers to find out how well the cars perform when they're actually on the road.

The new plan, known as STAR, replaces the state's Gold Shield program.

The need for change is clear, officials say. A 2009 audit found that 19 percent of cars that initially passed a smog check ended up failing a roadside inspection within a year.

"We want to make sure the people testing those vehicles are doing a good job of it," said Russ Heimerich, a spokesman for the state Department of Consumer Affairs, which includes the Bureau of Automotive Repair.

The software needed to monitor diagnostic computers will prove cheaper than the dynamometers, Heimerich said. That, in turn, should bring down the price drivers pay for the every-other-year tests.

For smog shop owners, the program is probably a mixed bag, said Steve Griffen, owner of Country Club Smog in Stockton.

Griffen is skeptical that the cost will come down much - if at all.

"My rents are not going to drop, and what I pay my people is not going to drop," Griffen said. "We have no intention of lowering our prices."

He said he does expect the tests to be quicker.

San Francisco attorney William Ferreira, who specializes in automotive cases, filed a lawsuit earlier this year attempting to block the program on behalf of a Southern California smog shop.

Many stations will be unable to qualify to meet the new, stricter standards required by the state to test older and dirtier cars, Ferreira said. That could effectively force them out of business.

Some of those standards are not within the control of smog-test-business owners, he said. For instance, whether cars remain in compliance after passing a smog check depends on many factors, such as the number of miles drivers put on those cars and whether they are properly maintained.

In the end there will be fewer smog stations, Ferreira said, which could actually drive up prices and increase wait times - precisely the opposite of what the state has predicted.

"There may not be a certified facility within 10 or 15 miles of your home," he said. "Driving across town, long waits and long lines - it really is that drastic."

The Bureau of Automotive Repair and the California Air Resources Board sponsored 2010 legislation to revamp the smog check program, a "major upgrade" in technology that would have the same effect as removing 800,000 old cars off the road.

To learn more about the new smog check program visit [smogcheck.ca.gov](http://smogcheck.ca.gov).

## **EPA Administrator Jackson announces resignation**

By Kevin Freking, Associated Press

In the Fresno Bee, San Francisco Chronicle and other papers, Thurs., Dec. 27, 2012

WASHINGTON -- The Obama administration's chief environmental watchdog, EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson, is stepping down after a nearly four-year tenure marked by high-profile brawls over global warming pollution, the Keystone XL oil pipeline, new controls on coal-fired plants and several other hot-button issues that affect the nation's economy and people's health.

Jackson, the agency's first black administrator, constantly found herself caught between administration pledges to solve controversial environmental problems and steady resistance from Republicans and industrial groups who complained that the agency's rules destroyed jobs and made it harder for American companies to compete internationally.

The GOP chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Rep. Fred Upton, said last year that Jackson would need her own parking spot at the Capitol because he planned to bring her in so frequently for questioning. Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney called for her firing, a stance that had little downside during the GOP primary.

Jackson, 50, a chemical engineer by training, did not point to any particular reason for her departure. Historically, Cabinet members looking to move on will leave at the beginning of a president's second term.

"I will leave the EPA confident the ship is sailing in the right direction, and ready in my own life for new challenges, time with my family and new opportunities to make a difference," she said in a statement. Jackson gave no exact date for her departure, but will leave after Obama's State of the Union address in late January.

In a separate statement, Obama said Jackson has been "an important part of my team." He thanked her for serving and praised her "unwavering commitment" to the public's health.

"Under her leadership, the EPA has taken sensible and important steps to protect the air we breathe and the water we drink, including implementing the first national standard for harmful mercury pollution, taking important action to combat climate change under the Clean Air Act and playing a key role in establishing historic fuel economy standards that will save the average American family thousands of dollars at the pump, while also slashing carbon pollution."

Environmental groups had high expectations for the Obama administration after eight years of President George W. Bush, a Texas oilman who rebuffed the agency's scientists and refused to take action on climate change. Jackson came into office promising a more active EPA.

But she soon learned that changes would not occur as quickly as she had hoped. Jackson watched as a Democratic-led effort to reduce global warming emissions passed the House in 2009 but was abandoned by the Senate as economic concerns became the priority. The concept behind the bill, referred to as cap-and-trade, would have set up a system in which power companies bought and sold pollution rights.

"That's a revolutionary message for our country," Jackson said at a Paris conference a few months after taking the job.

Jackson experienced another big setback last year when the administration scrubbed a clean-air regulation aimed at reducing health-threatening smog. Republican lawmakers had been hammering the president over the proposed rule, accusing his administration of making it harder for companies to create jobs.

She also vowed to better control toxic coal ash after a massive spill in Tennessee, but that regulation has yet to be finalized more than four years after the spill.

Jackson had some victories, too. During her tenure, the administration finalized a new rule doubling fuel efficiency standards for cars and light trucks. The requirements will be phased in over 13 years and eventually require all new vehicles to average 54.5 mpg, up from 28.6 mpg at the end of last year.

She shepherded another rule that forces power plants to control mercury and other toxic pollutants for the first time. Previously, the nation's coal- and oil-fired power plants had been allowed to run without addressing their full environmental and public health costs.

Jackson also helped persuade the administration to table the controversial Keystone XL pipeline, which would have brought carbon-heavy tar sands oil from Canada to refineries in Texas.

House Republicans dedicated much of their time this past election year trying to rein in the EPA. They passed a bill seeking to thwart regulation of the coal industry and quash the stricter fuel efficiency standards. In the end, though, the bill made no headway in the Senate. It served mostly as election-year fodder that appeared to have little impact on the presidential election.